

Joseph Earl and
Genevieve Thornton
Arrington

Collection of 19th
Century Americana
Brigham Young University Library

13





10 Cents

PR
1710
L53
955

Sarah H. Emerson.

LIZZIE LEIGH;

AND OTHER TALES.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "MARY BARTON," "RUTH," &c.

COPYRIGHT EDITION.

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

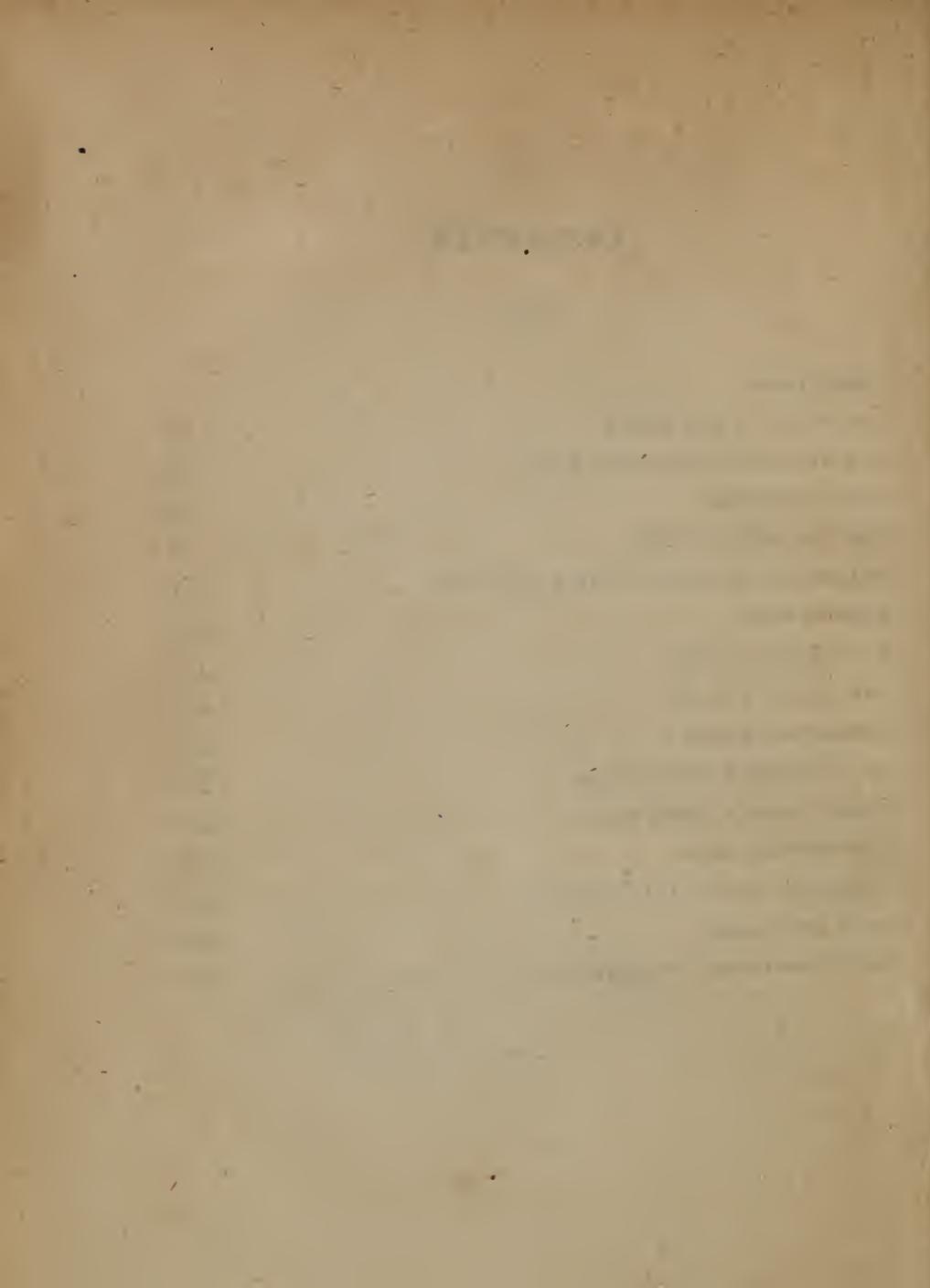
1855.

000131712510

Harold B. Lee Library
Brigham Young University
Provo, Utah

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
LIZZIE LEIGH	1
THE WELL OF PEN-MORFA	35
THE HEART OF JOHN MIDDLETON.	59
DISAPPEARANCES	83
THE OLD NURSE'S STORY.	94
TRAITS AND STORIES OF THE HUGUENOTS	117
MORTON HALL	132
MY FRENCH MASTER.	173
THE SQUIRE'S STORY	198
COMPANY MANNERS	215
MR. HARRISON'S CONFESSIONS	237
LIBBIE MARSH'S THREE ERAS.	318
THE SEXTON'S HERO.	347
CHRISTMAS STORMS AND SUNSHINE	358
HAND AND HEART	370
BESSY'S TROUBLES AT HOME	390



LIZZIE LEIGH; AND OTHER TALES.

LIZZIE LEIGH.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN Death is present in a household on a Christmas Day, the very contrast between the time as it now is, and the day as it has often been, gives a poignancy to sorrow, — a more utter blankness to the desolation. James Leigh died just as the far away bells of Rochdale Church were ringing for morning service on Christmas Day, 1836. A few minutes before his death, he opened his already glazing eyes, and made a sign to his wife, by the faint motion of his lips, that he had yet something to say. She stooped close down, and caught the broken whisper, “I forgive her, Anne! May God forgive me!”

“Oh my love, my dear! only get well, and I will never cease showing my thanks for those words. May God in heaven bless thee for saying them. Thou ’rt not so restless, my lad! may be — Oh God!”

For even while she spoke, he died.

They had been two-and-twenty years man and wife; for nineteen of those years their life had been as calm and happy, as the most perfect uprightness on the one side, and the most complete confidence and loving submission on the other, could make it. Milton’s famous line might have been framed and hung up as the rule of their married life, for he was truly the interpreter, who stood between God and her; she would have considered herself wicked if she had ever dared even to think him austere, though as certainly as he was an upright man, so surely was he

hard, stern, and inflexible. But for three years the moan and the murmur had never been out of her heart; she had rebelled against her husband as against a tyrant, with a hidden, sullen rebellion, which tore up the old land-marks of wifely duty and affection, and poisoned the fountains whence gentlest love and reverence had once been for ever springing.

But those last blessed words replaced him on his throne in her heart, and called out penitent anguish for all the bitter estrangement of later years. It was this which made her refuse all the entreaties of her sons, that she would see the kind-hearted neighbours, who called on their way from church, to sympathise and condole. No! she would stay with the dead husband that had spoken tenderly at last, if for three years he had kept silence; who knew but what, if she had only been more gentle and less angrily reserved, he might have relented earlier — and in time!

She sat rocking herself to and fro by the side of the bed, while the footsteps below went in and out; she had been in sorrow too long to have any violent burst of deep grief now; the furrows were well worn in her cheeks, and the tears flowed quietly, if incessantly, all the day long. But when the winter's night drew on, and the neighbours had gone away to their homes, she stole to the window, and gazed out, long and wistfully, over the dark grey moors. She did not hear her son's voice, as he spoke to her from the door, nor his footstep as he drew nearer. She started when he touched her.

"Mother! come down to us. There's no one but Will and me. Dearest mother, we do so want you." The poor lad's voice trembled, and he began to cry. It appeared to require an effort on Mrs. Leigh's part to tear herself away from the window, but with a sigh she complied with his request.

The two boys (for though Will was nearly twenty-one, she still thought of him as a lad) had done everything in their power to make the house-place comfortable for her. She herself, in the old days before her sorrow, had never made a brighter fire or a cleaner hearth, ready for her husband's return home, than now awaited her. The tea-things were all put out, and the kettle was

boiling; and the boys had calmed their grief down into a kind of sober cheerfulness. They paid her every attention they could think of, but received little notice on her part; she did not resist—she rather submitted to all their arrangements; but they did not seem to touch her heart.

When tea was ended, — it was merely the form of tea that had been gone through,— Will moved the things away to the dresser. His mother leant back languidly in her chair.

“Mother, shall Tom read you a chapter? He’s a better scholar than I.”

“Aye, lad!” said she, almost eagerly. “That’s it. Read me the Prodigal Son. Aye, aye, lad. Thank thee.”

Tom found the chapter, and read it in the high-pitched voice which is customary in village-schools. His mother bent forward, her lips parted, her eyes dilated; her whole body instinct with eager attention. Will sat with his head depressed, and hung down. He knew why that chapter had been chosen; and to him it recalled the family’s disgrace. When the reading was ended, he still hung down his head in gloomy silence. But her face was brighter than it had been before for the day. Her eyes looked dreamy, as if she saw a vision; and by and by she pulled the bible towards her, and putting her finger underneath each word, began to read them aloud in a low voice to herself; she read again the words of bitter sorrow and deep humiliation; but most of all she paused and brightened over the father’s tender reception of the repentant prodigal.

So passed the Christmas evening in the Upclose Farm.

The snow had fallen heavily over the dark waving moorland, before the day of the funeral. The black storm-laden dome of heaven lay very still and close upon the white earth, as they carried the body forth out of the house which had known his presence so long as its ruling power. Two and two the mourners followed, making a black procession, in their winding march over the unbroken snow, to Milne-Row Church — now lost in some hollow of the bleak moors, now slowly climbing the heaving ascents. There was no long tarrying after the funeral, for many of the neighbours who accompanied the body to the

grave had far to go, and the great white flakes which came slowly down, were the boding fore-runners of a heavy storm. One old friend alone accompanied the widow and her sons to their home.

The Upclose Farm had belonged for generations to the Leighs; and yet its possession hardly raised them above the rank of labourers. There was the house and outbuildings, all of an old-fashioned kind, and about seven acres of barren unproductive land, which they had never possessed capital enough to improve; indeed they could hardly rely upon it for subsistence; and it had been customary to bring up the sons to some trade — such as a wheelwright's, or blacksmith's.

James Leigh had left a will, in the possession of the old man who accompanied them home. He read it aloud. James had bequeathed the farm to his faithful wife, Anne Leigh, for her lifetime; and afterwards, to his son William. The hundred and odd pounds in the savings'-bank was to accumulate for Thomas.

After the reading was ended, Anne Leigh sat silent for a time; and then she asked to speak to Samuel Orme alone. The sons went into the back-kitchen, and thence strolled out into the fields regardless of the driving snow. The brothers were dearly fond of each other, although they were very different in character. Will, the elder, was like his father, stern, reserved, and scrupulously upright. Tom (who was ten years younger) was gentle and delicate as a girl, both in appearance and character. He had always clung to his mother, and dreaded his father. They did not speak as they walked, for they were only in the habit of talking about facts, and hardly knew the more sophisticated language applied to the description of feelings.

Meanwhile their mother had taken hold of Samuel Orme's arm with her trembling hand.

“Samuel, I must let the farm — I must.”

“Let the farm! What's come o'er the woman?”

“Oh, Samuel!” said she, her eyes swimming in tears, “I'm just fain to go and live in Manchester. I mun let the farm.”

Samuel looked, and pondered, but did not speak for some time. At last he said —

"If thou hast made up thy mind, there's no speaking again it; and thou must e'en go. Thou 'lt be sadly pottered wi' Manchester ways; but that's not my look out. Why, thou 'lt have to buy potatoes, a thing thou hast never done afore in all thy born life. Well! it's not my look out. It's rather for me than again me. Our Jenny is going to be married to Tom Higginbotham, and he was speaking of wanting a bit of land to begin upon. His father will be dying sometime, I reckon, and then he 'll step into the Croft Farm. But meanwhile"—

"Then, thou 'lt let the farm," said she, still as eagerly as ever.

"Aye, aye, he 'll take it fast enough, I've a notion. But I 'll not drive a bargain with thee just now; it would not be right; we 'll wait a bit."

"No; I cannot wait, settle it out at once."

"Well, well; I 'll speak to Will about it. I see him out yonder. I 'll step to him and talk it over."

Accordingly he went and joined the two lads, and without more ado, began the subject to them.

"Will, thy mother is fain to go live in Manchester, and covets to let the farm. Now, I 'm willing to take it for Tom Higginbotham; but I like to drive a keen bargain, and there would be no fun chaffering with thy mother just now. Let thee and me buckle to, my lad! and try and cheat each other; it will warm us this cold day."

"Let the farm!" said both the lads at once, with infinite surprise. "Go live in Manchester!"

When Samuel Orme found that the plan had never before been named to either Will or Tom, he would have nothing to do with it, he said, until they had spoken to their mother; likely she was "dazed" by her husband's death; he would wait a day or two, and not name it to any one; not to Tom Higginbotham himself, or may be he would set his heart upon it. The lads had better go in and talk it over with their mother. He bade them good day, and left them.

Will looked very gloomy, but he did not speak till they got near the house. Then he said,—

"Tom, go to th' shippon, and supper the cows. I want to speak to mother alone."

When he entered the house-place, she was sitting before the fire, looking into its embers. She did not hear him come in: for some time she had lost her quick perception of outward things.

"Mother! what's this about going to Manchester?" asked he.

"Oh, lad!" said she, turning round, and speaking in a beseeching tone, "I must go and seek our Lizzie. I cannot rest here for thinking on her. Many's the time I've left thy father sleeping in bed, and stole to th' window, and looked and looked my heart out towards Manchester, till I thought I must just set out and tramp over moor and moss straight away till I got there, and then lift up every downcast face till I came to our Lizzie. And often, when the south wind was blowing soft among the hollows, I've fancied (it could but be fancy, thou knowest) I heard her crying upon me; and I've thought the voice came closer and closer, till at last it was sobbing out 'Mother' close to the door; and I've stolen down, and undone the latch before now, and looked out into the still black night, thinking to see her,— and turned sick and sorrowful when I heard no living sound but the sough of the wind dying away. Oh! speak not to me of stopping here, when she may be perishing for hunger, like the poor lad in the parable." And now she lifted up her voice, and wept aloud.

Will was deeply grieved. He had been old enough to be told the family shame when, more than two years before, his father had had his letter to his daughter returned by her mistress in Manchester, telling him that Lizzie had left her service some time — and why. He had sympathised with his father's stern anger; though he had thought him something hard, it is true, when he had forbidden his weeping, heart-broken wife to go and try to find her poor sinning child, and declared that henceforth they would have no daughter; that she should be as one dead, and her name never more be named at market or at meal time, in blessing or in prayer. He had held his peace, with compressed lips and contracted brow, when the neigh-

bours had noticed to him how poor Lizzie's death had aged both his father and his mother; and how they thought the bereaved couple would never hold up their heads again. He himself had felt as if that one event had made him old before his time; and had envied Tom the tears he had shed over poor, pretty, innocent, dead Lizzie. He thought about her sometimes, till he ground his teeth together, and could have struck her down in her shame. His mother had never named her to him until now.

"Mother!" said he at last. "She may be dead. Most likely she is."

"No, Will; she is not dead," said Mrs. Leigh. "God will not let her die till I've seen her once again. Thou dost not know how I've prayed and prayed just once again to see her sweet face, and tell her I've forgiven her, though she's broken my heart — she has, Will." She could not go on for a minute or two for the choking sobs. "Thou dost not know that, or thou wouldst not say she could be dead, — for God is very merciful, Will; He is, — He is much more pitiful than man, — I could never ha' spoken to thy father as I did to Him, — and yet thy father forgave her at last. The last words he said were that he forgave her. Thou'lt not be harder than thy father, Will? Do not try and hinder me going to seek her, for it's no use."

Will sat very still for a long time before he spoke. At last he said, "I'll not hinder you. I think she's dead, but that's no matter."

"She is not dead," said her mother, with low earnestness. Will took no notice of the interruption.

"We will all go to Manchester for a twelvemonth, and let the farm to Tom Higginbotham. I'll get blacksmith's work; and Tom can have good schooling for awhile, which he's always craving for. At the end of the year you'll come back, mother, and give over fretting for Lizzie, and thank with me that she is dead, — and, to my mind, that would be more comfort than to think of her living;" he dropped his voice as he spoke these last words. She shook her head, but made no answer. He asked again, —

"Will you, mother, agree to this?"

"I'll agree to it a-this-ns," said she. "If I hear and see nought of her for a twelvemonth, me being in Manchester looking out, I'll just ha' broken my heart fairly before the year's ended, and then I shall know neither love nor sorrow for her any more, when I'm at rest in the grave — I'll agree to that, Will."

"Well, I suppose it must be so. I shall not tell Tom, mother, why we're flitting to Manchester. Best spare him."

"As thou wilt," said she, sadly, "so that we go, that's all."

Before the wild daffodils were in flower in the sheltered coves round Upclose Farm, the Leights were settled in their Manchester home; if they could ever grow to consider that place as a home, where there was no garden, or outbuilding, no fresh breezy outlet, no far-stretching view, over moor and hollow, — no dumb animals to be tended, and, what more than all they missed, no old haunting memories, even though those remembrances told of sorrow, and the dead and gone.

Mrs. Leigh heeded the loss of all these things less than her sons. She had more spirit in her countenance than she had had for months, because now she had hope; of a sad enough kind, to be sure, but still it was hope. She performed all her household duties, strange and complicated as they were, and bewildered as she was with all the town necessities of her new manner of life; but when her house was "sided," and the boys come home from their work, in the evening, she would put on her things and steal out, unnoticed, as she thought, but not without many a heavy sigh from Will, after she had closed the house-door and departed. It was often past midnight before she came back, pale and weary, with almost a guilty look upon her face; but that face so full of disappointment and hope deferred, that Will had never the heart to say what he thought of the folly and hopelessness of the search. Night after night it was renewed, till days grew to weeks, and weeks to months. All this time Will did his duty towards her as well as he could, without having sympathy with her. He stayed at home in the evenings for Tom's sake, and often wished he had Tom's plea-

sure in reading, for the time hung heavy on his hands as he sat up for his mother.

I need not tell you how the mother spent the weary hours. And yet I will tell you something. She used to wander out, at first as if without a purpose, till she rallied her thoughts, and brought all her energies to bear one the one point; then she went with earnest patience along the least-known ways to some new part of the town, looking wistfully with dumb entreaty into people's faces; sometimes catching a glimpse of a figure which had a kind of momentary likeness to her child's, and following that figure with never-wearying perseverance, till some light from shop or lamp showed the cold strange face which was not her daughter's. Once or twice a kind-hearted passer-by, struck by her look of yearning woe, turned back and offered help, or asked her what she wanted. When so spoken to, she answered only, "You don't know a poor girl they call Lizzie Leigh, do you?" and when they denied all knowledge, she shook her head, and went on again. I think they believed her to be crazy. But she never spoke first to any one. She sometimes took a few minutes' rest on the door-steps, and sometimes (very seldom) covered her face and cried; but she could not afford to lose time and chances in this way; while her eyes were blinded with tears, the lost one might pass by unseen.

One evening, in the rich time of shortening autumn-days, Will saw an old man, who, without being absolutely drunk, could not guide himself rightly along the foot-path, and was mocked for his unsteadiness of gait by the idle boys of the neighbourhood. For his father's sake Will regarded old the age with tenderness, even when most degraded and removed from the stern virtues which dignified that father; so he took old man home, and seemed to believe his often-repeated assertions, that he drank nothing but water. The stranger tried to stiffen himself up into steadiness as he drew nearer home, as if there were some one there for whose respect he cared even in his half-intoxicated state, or whose feelings he feared to grieve. His home was exquisitely clean and neat, even in outside appearance; threshold, window, and window-sill, were outward

signs of some spirit of purity within. Will was rewarded for his attention by a bright glance of thanks, succeeded by a blush of shame, from a young woman of twenty, or thereabouts. She did not speak or second her father's hospitable invitations to him to be seated. She seemed unwilling that a stranger should witness her father's attempts at stately sobriety, and Will could not bear to stay and see her distress. But when the old man, with many a flabby shake of the hand, kept asking him to come again some other evening and see them, Will sought her downcast eyes, and, though he could not read their veiled meaning, he answered timidly, "If it's agreeable to everybody, I'll come, and thank ye." But there was no answer from the girl, to whom this speech was in reality addressed; and Will left the house, liking her all the better for never speaking.

He thought about her a great deal for the next day or two; he scolded himself for being so foolish as to think of her, and then fell to with fresh vigour, and thought of her more than ever. He tried to depreciate her: he told himself she was not pretty, and then made indignant answer that he liked her looks much better than any beauty of them all. He wished he was not so country-looking, so red-faced, so broad-shouldered; while she was like a lady, with her smooth, colourless complexion, her bright dark hair and her spotless dress. Pretty, or not pretty, she drew his footsteps towards her; he could not resist the impulse that made him wish to see her once more, and find out some fault which should unloose his heart from her unconscious keeping. But there she was, pure and maidenly as before. She sat and looked, answering her father at cross-purposes, while she drew more and more into the shadow of the chimney-corner out of sight. Then the spirit that possessed him (it was not he himself, sure, that did so impudent a thing!) made him get up and carry the candle to a different place, under the pretence of giving her more light at her sewing, but, in reality, to be able to see her better; she could not stand this much longer, but jumped up, and said she must put her little niece to bed; and surely, there never was, before or since, so troublesome a child of two years old; for though Will stayed

an hour and a half longer, she never came down again. He won the father's heart, though, by his capacity as a listener, for some people are not at all particular, and, so that they themselves may talk on undisturbed, are not so unreasonable as to expect attention to what they say.

Will did gather this much, however, from the old man's talk. He had once been quite in a genteel line of business, but had failed for more money than any greengrocer he had heard of; at least, any who did not mix up fish and game with greengrocery proper. This grand failure seemed to have been the event of his life, and one on which he dwelt with a strange kind of pride. It appeared as if at present he rested from his past exertions (in the bankrupt line), and depended on his daughter, who kept a small school for very young children. But all these particulars Will only remembered and understood when he had left the house; at the time he heard them, he was thinking of Susan. After he had made good his footing at Mr. Palmer's, he was not long, you may be sure, without finding some reason for returning again and again. He listened to her father, he talked to the little niece, but he looked at Susan, both while he listened and while he talked. Her father kept on insisting upon his former gentility, the details of which would have appeared very questionable to Will's mind, if the sweet, delicate, modest Susan had not thrown an inexplicable air of refinement over all she came near. She never spoke much; she was generally diligently at work; but when she moved, it was so noiselessly, and when she did speak, it was in so low and soft a voice, that silence, speech, motion, and stillness, alike seemed to remove her high above Will's reach into some saintly and inaccessible air of glory — high above his reach, even as she knew him! And, if she were made acquainted with the dark secret behind, of his sister's shame, which was kept ever present to his mind by his mother's nightly search among the outcast and forsaken, would not Susan shrink away from him with loathing, as if he were tainted by the involuntary relationship? This was his dread; and thereupon followed a resolution that he would withdraw from her sweet company before it was too late. So he

resisted internal temptation, and stayed at home, and suffered and sighed. He became angry with his mother for her untiring patience in seeking for one who, he could not help hoping, was dead rather than alive. He spoke sharply to her, and received only such sad deprecatory answers as made him reproach himself, and still more lose sight of peace of mind. This struggle could not last long without affecting his health; and Tom, his sole companion through the long evenings, noticed his increasing languor, his restless irritability, with perplexed anxiety, and at last resolved to call his mother's attention to his brother's haggard, care-worn looks. She listened with a startled recollection of Will's claims upon her love. She noticed his decreasing appetite, and half-checked sighs.

"Will, lad! what's come o'er thee?" said she to him, as he sat listlessly gazing into the fire.

"There's nought the matter with me," said he, as if annoyed at her remark.

"Nay, lad, but there is." He did not speak again to contradict her; indeed she did not know if he had heard her, so unmoved did he look.

"Wouldst like to go back to Upclose Farm?" asked she, sorrowfully.

"It's just blackberrying time," said Tom.

Will shook his head. She looked at him awhile, as if trying to read that expression of despondency and trace it back to its source.

"Will and Tom could go," said she; "I must stay here till I've found her, thou know'st," continued she, dropping her voice.

He turned quickly round, and with the authority he at all times exercised over Tom, bade him begone to bed.

When Tom had left the room, he prepared to speak.

CHAPTER II.

"MOTHER," then said Will, "why will you keep on thinking she's alive? If she were but dead, we need never name her

name again. We 've never heard nought on her, since father wrote her that letter; we never knew whether she got it or not. She 'd left her place before then. Many a one dies in — ”

“ Oh my lad! dunnot speak so to me, or my heart will break outright,” said his mother, with a sort of cry. Then she calmed herself, for she yearned to persuade him to her own belief. “ Thou never asked, and thou 'rt too like thy father for me to tell without asking — but it were all to be near Lizzie's old place that I settled down on this side o' Manchester; and the very day at after we came, I went to her old missus, and asked to speak a word wi' her. I had a strong mind to cast it up to her, that she should ha' sent my poor lass away, without telling on it to us first; but she were in black, and looked so sad I could na' find in my heart to threep it up. — But I did ask her a bit about our Lizzie. The master would have her turned away at a day's warning, (he 's gone to t'other place; I hope he 'll meet wi' more mercy there than he showed our Lizzie, — I do, —) and when the missus asked her should she write to us, she says Lizzie shook her head; and when she speered at her again, the poor lass went down on her knees, and begged her not, for she said it would break my heart, (as it has done, Will — God knows it has),” said the poor mother, choking with her struggle to keep down her hard, overmastering grief, “ and her father would curse her — Oh, God, teach me to be patient.” She could not speak for a few minutes, — “ and the lass threatened, and said she 'd go drown herself in the canal, if the missus wrote home, — and so —

“ Well! I 'd got a trace of my child, — the missus thought she 'd gone to th' workhouse to be nursed; and there I went, — and there, sure enough, she had been, — and they 'd turned her out as soon as she were strong, and told her she were young enough to work, — but whatten kind o' work would be open to her, lad, and her baby to keep?”

Will listened to his mother's tale with deep sympathy, not unmixed with the old bitter shame. But the opening of her heart had unlocked his, and after a while he spoke.

“ Mother! I think I 'd e'en better go home. Tom can stay

wi' thee. I know I should stay too, but I cannot stay in peace so near — her, — without craving to see her, — Susan Palmer, I mean."

"Has the old Mr. Palmer thou telled me on a daughter?" asked Mrs. Leigh.

"Aye, he has. And I love her above a bit. And it's because I love her I want to leave Manchester. That's all."

Mrs. Leigh tried to understand this speech for some time, but found it difficult of interpretation.

"Why shouldst thou not tell her thou lov'st her? Thou'rt a likely lad, and sure o' work. Thou'l have Upclose at my death; and as for that I could let thee have it now, and keep mysel by doing a bit of charring. It seems to me a very backwards sort o' way of winning her to think of leaving Manchester."

"Oh mother, she's so gentle and so good, — she's down-right holy. She's never known a touch of sin; and can I ask her to marry me, knowing what we do about Lizzie, and fearing worse? I doubt if one like her could ever care for me; but if she knew about my sister, it would put a gulf between us, and she'd shudder up at the thought of crossing it. You don't know how good she is, mother!"

"Will, Will! if she's so good as thou say'st, she'll have pity on such as my Lizzie. If she has no pity for such, she's a cruel Pharisee, and thou'rt best without her."

But he only shook his head, and sighed; and for the time the conversation dropped.

But a new idea sprang up in Mrs. Leigh's head. She thought that she would go and see Susan Palmer, and speak up for Will, and tell her the truth about Lizzie; and according to her pity for the poor sinner, would she be worthy or unworthy of him. She resolved to go the very next afternoon, but without telling any one of her plan. Accordingly she looked out the Sunday clothes she had never before had the heart to unpack since she came to Manchester, but which she now desired to appear in, in order to do credit to Will. She put on her old-fashioned black mode bonnet, trimmed with real lace; her scarlet cloth

cloak, which she had had ever since she was married; and always spotlessly clean, she set forth on her unauthorised embassy. She knew the Palmers lived in Crown Street, though where she had heard it she could not tell; and modestly asking her way, she arrived in the street about a quarter to four o'clock. She stopped to inquire the exact number, and the woman whom she addressed told her that Susan Palmer's school would not be loosed till four, and asked her to step in and wait until then at her house.

"For," said she, smiling, "them that wants Susan Palmer wants a kind friend of ours; so we, in a manner, call cousins. Sit down, missus, sit down. I'll wipe the chair, so that it shanna dirty your cloak. My mother used to wear them bright cloaks, and they're right gradely things again a green field."

"Han ye known Susan Palmer long?" asked Mrs. Leigh, pleased with the admiration of her cloak.

"Ever since they comded to live in our street. Our Sally goes to her school."

"Whatten sort of a lass is she, for I ha' never seen her?"

"Well,—as for looks, I cannot say. It's so long since I first knowed her, that I've clean forgotten what I thought of her then. My master says he never saw such a smile for gladdening the heart. But may be it's not looks you're asking about. The best thing I can say of her looks is, that she's just one a stranger would stop in the street to ask help from if he needed it. All the little childer creeps as close as they can to her; she'll have as many as three or four hanging to her apron all at once."

"Is she cocket at all?"

"Cocket, bless you! you never saw a creature less set up in all your life. Her father's cocket enough. No! she's not cocket any way. You've not heard much of Susan Palmer, I reckon, if you think she's cocket. She's just one to come quietly in, and do the very thing most wanted; little things, maybe, that any one could do, but that few would think on, for another. She'll bring her thimble wi' her, and mend up after the childer o' nights,—and she writes all Betty Harke's letters to her

grandchild out at service, — and she 's in nobody's way, and that 's a great matter, I take it. Here 's the childer running past! School is loosed. You 'll find her now, missus, ready to hear and to help. But we none on us frab her by going near her in school-time."

Poor Mrs. Leigh's heart began to beat, and she could almost have turned round and gone home again. Her country breeding had made her shy of strangers, and this Susan Palmer appeared to her like a real born lady by all accounts. So she knocked with a timid feeling at the indicated door, and when it was opened, dropped a simple curtsey without speaking. Susan had her little niece in her arms, curled up with fond endearment against her breast, but she put her gently down to the ground, and instantly placed a chair in the best corner of the room for Mrs. Leigh, when she told her who she was. "It 's not Will as has asked me to come," said the mother, apologetically, "I 'd a wish just to speak to you myself!"

Susan coloured up to her temples, and stooped to pick up the little toddling girl. In a minute or two Mrs. Leigh began again.

"Will thinks you would na respect us if you knew all; but I think you could na help feeling for us in the sorrow God has put upon us; so I just put on my bonnet, and came off unknownst to the lads. Every one says you 're very good, and that the Lord has kepted you from falling from his ways; but maybe you 've never yet been tried and tempted as some is. I 'm perhaps speaking too plain, but my heart 's welly broken, and I can't be choice in my words as them who are happy can. Well now! I 'll tell you the truth. Will dreads you to hear it, but I 'll just tell it you. You mun know," — but here the poor woman's words failed her, and she could do nothing but sit rocking herself backwards and forwards, with sad eyes, straight-gazing into Susan's face, as if they tried to tell the tale of agony which the quivering lips refused to utter. Those wretched, stony eyes forced the tears down Susan's cheeks, and, as if this sympathy gave the mother strength, she went on in a low voice, "I had a daughter once, my heart's darling. Her father thought I made too much on her, and that she 'd

grow marred staying at home; so he said she mun go among strangers, and learn to rough it. She were young, and liked the thought of seeing a bit of the world; and her father heard on a place in Manchester. Well! I'll not weary you. That poor girl were led astray; and first thing we heard on it, was when a letter of her father's was sent back by her missus, saying she'd left her place, or, to speak right, the master had turned her into the street soon as he had heard of her condition — and she not seventeen!"

She now cried aloud; and Susan wept too. The little child looked up into their faces, and, catching their sorrow, began to whimper and wail. Susan took it softly up, and hiding her face in its little neck, tried to restrain her tears, and think of comfort for the mother. At last she said:

"Where is she now?"

"Lass! I dunnot know," said Mrs. Leigh, checking her sobs to communicate this addition to her distress. "Mrs. Lomax telled me she went" —

"Mrs. Lomax — what Mrs. Lomax?"

"Her as lives in Brabazon-street. She telled me my poor wench went to the workhouse fra there. I'll not speak again the dead; but if her father would but ha' letten me, — but he were one who had no notion — no, I'll not say that; best say nought. He forgave her on his death-bed. I dare say I did na go th' right way to work."

"Will you hold the child for me one instant?" said Susan.

"Ay, if it will come to me. Childer used to be fond on me till I got the sad look on my face that scares them, I think."

But the little girl clung to Susan: so she carried it upstairs with her. Mrs. Leigh sat by herself — how long she did not know.

Susan came down with a bundle of far-worn baby-clothes.

"You must listen to me a bit, and not think too much about what I'm going to tell you. Nanny is not my niece, nor any kin to me, that I know of. I used to go out working by the day. One night, as I came home, I thought some woman was following me; I turned to look. The woman, before I could see her face

(for she turned it to one side), offered me something. I held out my arms by instinct; she dropped a bundle into them, with a bursting sob that went straight to my heart. It was a baby. I looked round again; but the woman was gone. She had run away as quick as lightning. There was a little packet of clothes — very few — and as if they were made out of its mother's gowns, for they were large patterns to buy for a baby. I was always fond of babies; and I had not my wits about me, father says: for it was very cold, and when I'd seen as well as I could (for it was past ten) that there was no one in the street, I brought it in and warmed it. Father was very angry when he came, and said he'd take it to the workhouse the next morning, and flyted me sadly about it. But when morning came I could not bear to part with it; it had slept in my arms all night; and I've heard what workhouse bringing-up is. So I told father I'd give up going out working, and stay at home and keep school, if I might only keep the baby; and after awhile, he said if I earned enough for him to have his comforts, he'd let me; but he's never taken to her. Now, don't tremble so,— I've but a little more to tell,— and maybe I'm wrong in telling it; but I used to work next door to Mrs. Lomax's, in Brabazon-street, and the servants were all thick together; and I heard about Bessy (they called her) being sent away. I don't know that ever I saw her; but the time would be about fitting to this child's age, and I've sometimes fancied it was hers. And now, will you look at the little clothes that came with her — bless her!"

But Mrs. Leigh had fainted. The strange joy and shame, and gushing love for the little child had overpowered her; it was some time before Susan could bring her round. There she was all trembling, sick impatience to look at the little frocks. Among them was a slip of paper which Susan had forgotten to name, that had been pinned to the bundle. On it was scrawled in a round, stiff hand:

"Call her Anne. She does not cry much, and takes a deal of notice. God bless you and forgive me."

The writing was no clue at all; the name "Anne," common

though it was, seemed something to build upon. But Mrs. Leigh recognised one of the frocks instantly, as being made out of part of a gown that she and her daughter had bought together in Rochdale.

She stood up, and stretched out her hands in the attitude of blessing over Susan's bent head.

"God bless you, and show you His mercy in your need, as you have shown it to this little child."

She took the little creature in her arms, and smoothed away her sad looks to a smile, and kissed it fondly, saying over and over again, "Nanny, Nanny, my little Nanny." At last the child was soothed, and looked in her face and smiled back again.

"It has her eyes," said she to Susan.

"I never saw her to the best of my knowledge. I think it must be hers by the frock. But where can she be?"

"God knows," said Mrs. Leigh; "I dare not think she's dead. I'm sure she isn't."

"No! she's not dead. Every now and then a little packet is thrust in under our door, with may be two half-crowns in it; once it was half-a-sovereign. Altogether I've got seven-and-thirty shillings wrapped up for Nanny. I never touch it, but I've often thought the poor mother feels near to God when she brings this money. Father wanted to set the policeman to watch, but I said No, for I was afraid if she was watched she might not come, and it seemed such a holy thing to be checking her in, I could not find in my heart to do it."

"Oh, if we could but find her! I'd take her in my arms, and we'd just lie down and die together."

"Nay, don't speak so!" said Susan gently, "for all that's come and gone, she may turn right at last. Mary Magdalen did, you know."

"Eh! but I were nearer right about thee than Will. He thought you would never look on him again if you knew about Lizzie. But thou'rt not a Pharisee."

"I'm sorry he thought I could be so hard," said Susan in a low voice, and colouring up. Then Mrs. Leigh was alarmed, and

in her motherly anxiety, she began to fear lest she had injured Will in Susan's estimation.

"You see Will thinks so much of you — gold would not be good enough for you to walk on, in his eye. He said you'd never look at him as he was, let alone his being brother to my poor wench. He loves you so, it makes him think meanly on everything belonging to himself, as not fit to come near ye, — but he's a good lad, and a good son, — thou'l be a happy woman if thou'l have him, — so don't let my words go against him; don't!"

But Susan hung her head, and made no answer. She had not known until now, that Will thought so earnestly and seriously about her; and even now she felt afraid that Mrs. Leigh's words promised her too much happiness, and that they could not be true. At any rate the instinct of modesty made her shrink from saying anything which might seem like a confession of her own feelings to a third person. Accordingly she turned the conversation on the child.

"I'm sure he could not help loving Nanny," said she. "There never was such a good little darling; don't you think she'd win his heart if he knew she was his niece, and perhaps bring him to think kindly on his sister?"

"I dunnot know," said Mrs. Leigh, shaking her head. "He has a turn in his eye like his father, that makes me —. He's right down good though. But you see I've never been a good one at managing folk; one severe look turns me sick, and then I say just the wrong thing, I'm so fluttered. Now I should like nothing better than to take Nancy home with me, but Tom knows nothing but that his sister is dead, and I've not the knack of speaking rightly to Will. I dare not do it, and that's the truth. But you mun not think badly of Will. He's so good hissel, that he can't understand how any one can do wrong; and, above all, I'm sure he loves you dearly."

"I don't think I could part with Nancy," said Susan, anxious to stop this revelation of Will's attachment to herself. "He'll come round to her soon; he can't fail; and I'll keep a

sharp lookout after the poor mother, and try and catch her the next time she comes with her little parcels of money."

"Aye, lass; we mun get hold of her; my Lizzie. I love thee dearly for thy kindness to her child: but, if thou canst catch her for me, I'll pray for thee when I'm too near my death to speak words; and while I live, I'll serve thee next to her,—she mun come first, thou know'st. God bless thee, lass. My heart is lighter by a deal than it was when I comed in. Them lads will be looking for me home, and I mun go, and leave this little sweet one," kissing it. "If I can take courage, I'll tell Will all that has come and gone between us two. He may come and see thee, mayn't he?"

"Father will be very glad to see him, I'm sure," replied Susan. The way in which this was spoken satisfied Mrs. Leigh's anxious heart that she had done Will no harm by what she had said; and with many a kiss to the little one, and one more fervent tearful blessing on Susan, she went home-wards.

CHAPTER III.

THAT night Mrs. Leigh stopped at home; that only night for many months. Even Tom, the scholar, looked up from his books in amazement; but then he remembered that Will had not been well, and that his mother's attention having been called to the circumstance, it was only natural she should stay to watch him. And no watching could be more tender, or more complete. Her loving eyes seemed never averted from his face; his grave, sad, careworn face. When Tom went to bed the mother left her seat, and going up to Will, where he sat looking at the fire, but not seeing it, she kissed his forehead, and said,

"Will! lad, I've been to see Susan Palmer!"

She felt the start under her hand which was placed on his shoulder, but he was silent for a minute or two. Then he said,

"What took you there, mother?"

"Why, my lad, it was likely I should wish to see one you cared for; I did not put myself forward. I put on my Sunday clothes, and tried to behave as yo'd ha liked me. At least I remember trying at first; but after, I forgot all."

She rather wished that he would question her as to what made her forget all. But he only said,

"How was she looking, mother?"

"Will, thou seest I never set eyes on her before; but she's a good, gentle looking creature; and I love her dearly, as I've reason to."

Will looked up with momentary surprise; for his mother was too shy to be usually taken with strangers. But after all it was natural in this case, for who could look at Susan without loving her? So still he did not ask any questions, and his poor mother had to take courage, and try again to introduce the subject near to her heart. But how?

"Will!" said she (jerking it out, in sudden despair of her own powers to lead to what she wanted to say), "I telled her all."

"Mother! you 've ruined me," said he standing up, and standing opposite to her with a stern white look of affright on his face.

"No! my own dear lad; dunnot look so scared, I have not ruined you!" she exclaimed, placing her two hands on his shoulders, and looking fondly into his face. "She 's not one to harden her heart against a mother's sorrow. My own lad, she's too good for that. She 's not one to judge and scorn the sinner. She 's too deep read in her New Testament for that. Take courage, Will; and thou mayst, for I watched her well, though it is not for one woman to let out another's secret. Sit thee down, lad, for thou look'st very white."

He sat down. His mother drew a stool towards him, and sat at his feet.

"Did you tell her about Lizzie, then?" asked he, hoarse and low.

"I did, I telled her all; and she fell a-crying over my deep sorrow, and the poor wench's sin. And then a light comed into

her face, trembling and quivering with some new glad thought; and what dost thou think it was, Will, lad? Nay, I 'll not misdoubt but that thy heart will give thanks as mine did, afore God and His angels, for her great goodness. That little Nanny is not her niece, she 's our Lizzie's own child, my little grandchild." She could no longer restrain her tears, and they fell hot and fast, but still she looked into his face.

"Did she know it was Lizzie's child? I do not comprehend," said he, flushing red.

"She knows now: she did not at first, but took the little helpless creature in, out of her own pitiful loving heart, guessing only that it was the child of shame, and she 's worked for it, and kept it, and tended it ever sin' it were a mere baby, and loves it fondly. Will! won't you love it?" asked she beseechingly.

He was silent for an instant; then he said, "Mother, I 'll try. Give me time, for all these things startle me. To think of Susan having to do with such a child!"

"Aye, Will! and to think (as may be yet) of Susan having to do with the child's mother! For she is tender and pitiful, and speaks hopefully of my lost one, and will try and find her for me, when she comes, as she does sometimes, to thrust money under the door, for her baby. Think of that, Will. Here 's Susan, good and pure as the angels in heaven, yet, like them, full of hope and mercy, and one who, like them, will rejoice over her as repents. Will, my lad, I 'm not afeard of you now, and I must speak, and you must listen. I am your mother, and I dare to command you, because I know I am in the right and that God is on my side. If He should lead the poor wandering lassie to Susan's door, and she comes back crying and sorrowful, led by that good angel to us once more, thou shalt never say a casting-up word to her about her sin, but be tender and helpful towards one 'who was lost and is found,' so may God's blessing rest on thee, and so mayst thou lead Susan home as thy wife."

She stood, no longer, as the meek, imploring gentle mother, but firm and dignified, as if the interpreter of God's will. Her

manner was so unusual and solemn, that it overcame all Will's pride and stubbornness. He rose softly while she was speaking, and bent his head as if in reverence at her words, and the solemn injunction which they conveyed. When she had spoken, he said in so subdued a voice that she was almost surprised at the sound, "Mother, I will."

"I may be dead and gone, — but all the same, — thou wilt take home the wandering sinner, and heal up her sorrows, and lead her to her Father's house. My lad! I can speak no more; I 'm turned very faint."

He placed her in a chair; he ran for water. She opened her eyes and smiled.

"God bless you, Will! Oh! I am so happy. It seems as if she were found; my heart is so filled with gladness."

That night Mr. Palmer stayed out late and long. Susan was afraid that he was at his old haunts and habits, — getting tipsy at some public-house: and this thought oppressed her, even though she had so much to make her happy in the consciousness that Will loved her. She sat up long, and then she went to bed, leaving all arranged as well as she could for her father's return. She looked at the little rosy sleeping girl who was her bed-fellow, with redoubled tenderness, and with many a prayerful thought. The little arms entwined her neck as she lay down, for Nanny was a light sleeper, and was conscious that she, who was loved with all the power of that sweet childish heart, was near her, and by her, although she was too sleepy to utter any of her half-formed words.

And by-and-by she heard her father come home, stumbling uncertain, trying first the windows, and next the door-fastenings, with many a loud incoherent murmur. The little Innocent twined around her seemed all the sweeter and more lovely, when she thought sadly of her erring father. And presently he called aloud for a light; she had left matches and all arranged as usual on the dresser, but fearful of some accident from fire, in his unusually intoxicated state, she now got up softly, and putting on a cloak, went down to his assistance.

Alas! the little arms that were unclosed from her soft neck

belonged to a light, easily awakened sleeper. Nanny missed her darling Susy, and terrified at being left alone in the vast mysterious darkness, which had no bounds, and seemed infinite, she slipped out of bed, and tottered in her little nightgown towards the door. There was a light below, and there was Susy and safety! So she went onwards two steps towards the steep abrupt stairs; and then dazzled with sleepiness, she stood, she wavered, she fell! Down on her head on the stone floor she fell! Susan flew to her, and spoke all soft, entreating, loving words; but her white lids covered up the blue violets of eyes, and there was no murmur came out of the pale lips. The warm tears that rained down did not awaken her; she lay stiff, and weary with her short life, on Susan's knee. Susan went sick with terror. She carried her upstairs, and laid her tenderly in bed; she dressed herself most hastily, with her trembling fingers. Her father was asleep on the settle down stairs; and useless, and worse than useless if awake. But Susan flew out of the door, and down the quiet resounding street, towards the nearest doctor's house. Quickly she went: but as quickly a shadow followed, as if impelled by some sudden terror. Susan rung wildly at the night-bell,—the shadow crouched near. The doctor looked out from an upstairs window.

“A little child has fallen down stairs at No. 9, Crown-street, and is very ill,—dying, I’m afraid. Please, for God’s sake, sir, come directly. No. 9, Crown-street.”

“I’ll be there directly,” said he, and shut the window.

“For that God you have just spoken about,—for His sake—tell me are you Susan Palmer? Is it my child that lies a-dying?” said the shadow springing forwards, and clutching poor Susan’s arm.

“It is a little child of two years old,—I do not know whose it is; I love it as my own. Come with me, whoever you are; come with me.”

The two sped along the silent streets,—as silent as the night were they. They entered the house; Susan snatched up the light, and carried it upstairs. The other followed.

She stood with wild glaring eyes by the bedside, never look-

ing at Susan, but hungrily gazing at the little white still child. She stooped down, and put her hand tight on her own heart, as if to still its beating, and bent her ear to the pale lips. Whatever the result was, she did not speak; but threw off the bed-clothes wherewith Susan had tenderly covered up the little creature, and felt its left side.

Then she threw up her arms with a cry of wild despair.

“She is dead! she is dead!”

She looked so fierce, so mad, so haggard, that for an instant Susan was terrified — the next, the holy God had put courage into her heart, and her pure arms were round that guilty wretched creature, and her tears were falling fast and warm upon her breast. But she was thrown off with violence.

“You killed her — you slighted her — you let her fall down those stairs! you killed her!”

Susan cleared off the thick mist before her, and gazing at the mother with her clear, sweet, angel-eyes, said mournfully —

“I would have laid down my own life for her.”

“Oh, the murder is on my soul!” exclaimed the wild bereaved mother, with the fierce impetuosity of one who has none to love her and to be beloved, regard to whom might teach self-restraint.

“Hush!” said Susan, her finger on her lips. “Here is the doctor. God may suffer her to live.”

The poor mother turned sharp round. The doctor mounted the stair. Ah! that mother was right; the little child was really dead and gone.

And when he confirmed her judgment, the mother fell down in a fit. Susan, with her deep grief, had to forget herself, and forget her darling (her charge for years), and question the doctor what she must do with the poor wretch, who lay on the floor in such extreme of misery.

“She is the mother!” said she.

“Why did not she take better care of her child?” asked he, almost angrily.

But Susan only said, "The little child slept with me; and it was I that left her."

"I will go back and make up a composing draught; and while I am away you must get her to bed."

Susan took out some of her own clothes, and softly undressed the stiff, powerless, form. There was no other bed in the house but the one in which her father slept. So she tenderly lifted the body of her darling; and was going to take it down stairs, but the mother opened her eyes, and seeing what she was about, she said,

"I am not worthy to touch her, I am so wicked; I have spoken to you as I never should have spoken; but I think you are very good; may I have my own child to lie in my arms for a little while?"

Her voice was so strange a contrast to what it had been before she had gone into the fit, that Susan hardly recognised it; it was now so unspeakably soft, so irresistibly pleading, the features too had lost their fierce expression, and were almost as placid as death. Susan could not speak, but she carried the little child, and laid it in its mother's arms; then as she looked at them, something overpowered her, and she knelt down, crying aloud,

"Oh, my God, my God, have mercy on her, and forgive, and comfort her."

But the mother kept smiling, and stroking the little face, murmuring soft tender words, as if it were alive; she was going mad, Susan thought; but she prayed on, and on, and ever still she prayed with streaming eyes.

The doctor came with the draught. The mother took it, with docile unconsciousness of its nature as medicine. The doctor sat by her; and soon she fell asleep. Then he rose softly, and beckoning Susan to the door, he spoke to her there.

"You must take the corpse out of her arms. She will not awake. That draught will make her sleep for many hours. I will call before noon again. It is now daylight. Good-bye."

Susan shut him out; and then gently extricating the dead child from its mother's arms, she could not resist making her

own quiet moan over her darling. She tried to learn off its little placid face, dumb and pale before her.

“Not all the scalding tears of care
Shall wash away that vision fair;
Not all the thousand thoughts that rise,
Not all the sights that dim her eyes,
Shall e'er usurp the place
Of that little angel-face.”

And then she remembered what remained to be done. She saw that all was right in the house; her father was still dead asleep on the settle, in spite of all the noise of the night. She went out through the quiet streets, deserted still although it was broad daylight, and to where the Leighs lived. Mrs. Leigh, who kept her country hours, was opening her window-shutters. Susan took her by the arm, and, without speaking, went into the house-place. There she knelt down before the astonished Mrs. Leigh, and cried as she had never done before; but the miserable night had overpowered her, and she who had gone through so much calmly, now that the pressure seemed removed could not find the power to speak.

“My poor dear! What has made thy heart so sore as to come and cry a-this-ons. Speak and tell me. Nay, cry on, poor wench, if thou canst not speak yet. It will ease the heart, and then thou canst tell me.”

“Nanny is dead!” said Susan. “I left her to go to father, and she fell down stairs, and never breathed again. Oh, that’s my sorrow! but I’ve more to tell. Her mother is come — is in our house! Come and see if it’s your Lizzie.” Mrs. Leigh could not speak, but, trembling, put on her things and went with Susan in dizzy haste back to Crown-street.

CHAPTER IV.

As they entered the house in Crown-street, they perceived that the door would not open freely on its hinges, and Susan instinctively looked behind to see the cause of the obstruction. She immediately recognised the appearance of a little parcel, wrapped in a scrap of newspaper, and evidently containing

money. She stooped and picked it up. "Look!" said she, sorrowfully, "the mother was bringing this for her child last night."

But Mrs. Leigh did not answer. So near to the ascertaining if it were her lost child or no, she could not be arrested, but pressed onwards with trembling steps and a beating, fluttering heart. She entered the bed-room, dark and still. She took no heed of the little corpse, over which Susan paused, but she went straight to the bed, and withdrawing the curtain, saw Lizzie,—but not the former Lizzie, bright, gay, buoyant, and undimmed. This Lizzie was old before her time; her beauty was gone; deep lines of care, and alas! of want (or thus the mother imagined) were printed on the cheek, so round, and fair, and smooth, when last she gladdened her mother's eyes. Even in her sleep she bore the look of woe and despair which was the prevalent expression of her face by day; even in her sleep she had forgotten how to smile. But all these marks of the sin and sorrow she had passed through only made her mother love her the more. She stood looking at her with greedy eyes, which seemed as though no gazing could satisfy their longing; and at last she stooped down and kissed the pale, worn hand that lay outside the bed-clothes. No touch disturbed the sleeper; the mother need not have laid the hand so gently down upon the counterpane. There was no sign of life, save only now and then a deep sob-like sigh. Mrs. Leigh sat down beside the bed, and, still holding back the curtain, looked on and on, as if she could never be satisfied.

Susan would fain have stayed by her darling one; but she had many calls upon her time and thoughts, and her will had now, as ever, to be given up to that of others. All seemed to devolve the burden of their cares on her. Her father, ill-humoured from his last night's intemperance, did not scruple to reproach her with being the cause of little Nanny's death; and when, after bearing his upbraiding meekly for some time, she could no longer restrain herself, but began to cry, he wounded her even more by his injudicious attempts at comfort: for he said it was as well the child was dead; it was none of

theirs, and why should they be troubled with it? Susan wrung her hands at this, and came and stood before her father, and implored him to forbear. Then she had to take all requisite steps for the coroner's inquest; she had to arrange for the dismissal of her school; she had to summon a little neighbour, and send his willing feet on a message to William Leigh, who, she felt, ought to be informed of his mother's whereabouts, and of the whole state of affairs. She asked her messenger to tell him to come and speak to her, — that his mother was at her house. She was thankful that her father sauntered out to have a gossip at the nearest coach-stand, and to relate as many of the night's adventures as he knew; for as yet he was in ignorance of the watcher and the watched, who silently passed away the hours upstairs.

At dinner-time Will came. He looked red, glad, impatient, excited. Susan stood calm and white before him, her soft, loving eyes gazing straight into his.

"Will," said she, in a low, quiet voice, "your sister is upstairs."

"My sister!" said he, as if affrighted at the idea, and losing his glad look in one of gloom. Susan saw it, and her heart sank a little, but she went on as calm to all appearance as ever.

"She was little Nanny's mother, as perhaps you know. Poor little Nanny was killed last night by a fall down stairs." All the calmness was gone; all the suppressed feeling was displayed in spite of every effort. She sat down, and hid her face from him, and cried bitterly. He forgot everything but the wish, the longing to comfort her. He put his arm round her waist, and bent over her. But all he could say, was, "Oh, Susan, how can I comfort you! Don't take on so, — pray don't!" He never changed the words, but the tone varied every time he spoke. At last she seemed to regain her power over herself; and she wiped her eyes, and once more looked upon him with her own quiet, earnest, unfearing gaze.

"Your sister was near the house. She came in on hearing my words to the doctor. She is asleep now, and your mother is

watching her. I wanted to tell you all myself. Would you like to see your mother?"

"No!" said he. "I would rather see none but thee. Mother told me thou knew'st all." His eyes were downcast in their shame.

But the holy and pure, did not lower or vail her eyes.

She said, "Yes, I know all — all but her sufferings. Think what they must have been!"

He made answer low and stern, "She deserved them all; every jot."

"In the eye of God, perhaps she does. He is the judge; we are not."

"Oh!" she said with a sudden burst, "Will Leigh! I have thought so well of you; don't go and make me think you cruel and hard. Goodness is not goodness unless there is mercy and tenderness with it. There is your mother who has been nearly heart-broken, now full of rejoicing over her child — think of your mother."

"I do think of her," said he. "I remember the promise I gave her last night. Thou shouldst give me time. I would do right in time. I never think it o'er in quiet. But I will do what is right and fitting, never fear. Thou hast spoken out very plain to me; and misdoubted me, Susan; I love thee so, that thy words cut me. If I did hang back a bit from making sudden promises, it was because not even for love of thee, would I say what I was not feeling; and at first I could not feel all at once as thou wouldest have me. But I'm not cruel and hard; for if I had been, I should na' have grieved as I have done."

He made as if he were going away; and indeed he did feel he would rather think it over in quiet. But Susan, grieved at her incautious words, which had all the appearance of harshness, went a step or two nearer — paused — and then, all over blushes, said in a low soft whisper —

"Oh Will! I beg your pardon. I am very sorry — won't you forgive me?"

She who had always drawn back, and been so reserved, said this in the very softest manner; with eyes now uplifted beseech-

ingly, now dropped to the ground. Her sweet confusion told more than words could do; and Will turned back, all joyous in his certainty of being beloved, and took her in his arms and kissed her.

“My own Susan!” he said.

Meanwhile the mother watched her child in the room above. It was late in the afternoon before she awoke; for the sleeping draught had been very powerful. The instant she awoke, her eyes were fixed on her mother’s face with a gaze as unflinching as if she were fascinated. Mrs. Leigh did not turn away; nor move. For it seemed as if motion would unlock the stony command over herself which, while so perfectly still, she was enabled to preserve. But by-and-by Lizzie cried out in a piercing voice of agony —

“Mother, don’t look at me! I have been so wicked!” and instantly she hid her face, and grovelled among the bedclothes, and lay like one dead — so motionless was she.

Mrs. Leigh knelt down by the bed, and spoke in the most soothing tones.

“Lizzie, dear, don’t speak so. I’m thy mother, darling; don’t be afeard of me. I never left off loving thee, Lizzie. I was always a-thinking of thee. Thy father forgave thee afore he died.” (There was a little start here, but no sound was heard.) “Lizzie, lass, I’ll do aught for thee; I’ll live for thee; only don’t be afeard of me. Whate’er thou art or hast been, we’ll ne’er speak on’t. We’ll leave th’ oud times behind us, and go back to the Upclose Farm. I but left it to find thee, my lass; and God has led me to thee. Blessed be His name. And God is good too, Lizzie. Thou hast not forgot thy Bible, I’ll be bound, for thou wert always a scholar. I’m no reader, but I learnt off them texts to comfort me a bit, and I’ve said them many a time a day to myself. Lizzie, lass, don’t hide thy head so, it’s thy mother as is speaking to thee. Thy little child clung to me only yesterday; and if it’s gone to be an angel, it will speak to God for thee. Nay, don’t sob a that ’as; thou shalt have it again in Heaven; I know thou ’lt strive to get there, for thy little Nancy’s sake — and listen! I’ll tell thee

God's promises to them that are penitent — only doan't be afeard."

Mrs. Leigh folded her hands, and strove to speak very clearly, while she repeated every tender and merciful text she could remember. She could tell from the breathing that her daughter was listening; but she was so dizzy and sick herself when she had ended, that she could not go on speaking. It was all she could do to keep from crying aloud.

At last she heard her daughter's voice.

"Where have they taken her to?" she asked.

"She is down stairs. So quiet, and peaceful, and happy she looks."

"Could she speak? Oh, if God — if I might but have heard her little voice! Mother, I used to dream of it. May I see her once again — Oh mother, if I strive very hard, and God is very merciful, and I go to heaven, I shall not know her — I shall not know my own again — she will shun me as a stranger and cling to Susan Palmer and to you. Oh woe! Oh woe!" She shook with exceeding sorrow.

In her earnestness of speech she had uncovered her face, and tried to read Mrs. Leigh's thoughts through her looks. And when she saw those aged eyes brimming full of tears, and marked the quivering lips, she threw her arms round the faithful mother's neck, and wept there as she had done in many a childish sorrow; but with a deeper, a more wretched grief.

Her mother hushed her on her breast; and lulled her as if she were a baby; and she grew still and quiet.

They sat thus for a long, long time. At last Susan Palmer came up with some tea and bread and butter for Mrs. Leigh. She watched the mother feed her sick, unwilling child, with every fond inducement to eat which she could devise; they neither of them took notice of Susan's presence. That night they lay in each other's arms; but Susan slept on the ground beside them.

They took the little corpse (the little unconscious sacrifice, whose early calling-home had reclaimed her poor wandering mother,) to the hills, which in her life-time she had never

seen. They dared not lay her by the stern grand-father in Milne-Row churchyard, but they bore her to a lone moorland graveyard, where long ago the Quakers used to bury their dead. They laid her there on the sunny slope, where the earliest spring-flowers blow.

Will and Susan live at the Upclose Farm. Mrs. Leigh and Lizzie dwell in a cottage so secluded that, until you drop into the very hollow where it is placed, you do not see it. Tom is a schoolmaster in Rochdale, and he and Will help to support their mother. I only know that, if the cottage be hidden in a green hollow of the hills, every sound of sorrow in the whole upland is heard there — every call of suffering or of sickness for help is listened to by a sad, gentle-looking woman, who rarely smiles (and when she does, her smile is more sad than other people's tears,) but who comes out of her seclusion whenever there's a shadow in any household. Many hearts bless Lizzie Leigh, but she — she prays always and ever for forgiveness — such forgiveness as may enable her to see her child once more. Mrs. Leigh is quiet and happy. Lizzie is to her eyes something precious, — as the lost piece of silver — found once more. Susan is the bright one who brings sunshine to all. Children grow around her and call her blessed. One is called Nanny. Her, Lizzy often takes to the sunny graveyard in the uplands, and while the little creature gathers the daisies, and makes chains, Lizzie sits by a little grave and weeps bitterly.

THE WELL OF PEN-MORFA.

CHAPTER I.

OF a hundred travellers who spend a night at Trê-Madoc, in North Wales, there is not one, perhaps, who goes to the neighbouring village of Pen-Morfa. The new town, built by Mr. Maddocks, Shelley's friend, has taken away all the importance of the ancient village — formerly, as its name imports, "the head of the marsh;" that marsh which Mr. Maddocks drained and dyked, and reclaimed from the Traeth Mawr, till Pen-Morfa, against the walls of whose cottages the winter tides lashed in former days, has come to stand high and dry, three miles from the sea, on a disused road to Caernarvon. I do not think there has been a new cottage built in Pen-Morfa this hundred years; and many an old one has dates in some obscure corner which tell of the fifteenth century. The joists of timber, where they meet overhead, are blackened with the smoke of centuries. There is one large room, round which the beds are built like cupboards, with wooden doors to open and shut; somewhat in the old Scotch fashion, I imagine; and below the bed (at least in one instance I can testify that this was the case, and I was told it was not uncommon,) is a great wide wooden drawer, which contained the oat-cake, baked for some months' consumption by the family. They call the promontory of Llyn (the point at the end of Caernarvonshire), *Welsh Wales*: I think they might call Pen-Morfa a Welsh Welsh village; it is so national in its ways, and buildings, and inhabitants, and so different from the towns and hamlets into which the English throng in summer. How these said inhabitants of Pen-Morfa ever are distinguished by their names, I, uninitiated, cannot tell. I only know for a fact, that in

a family there with which I am acquainted, the eldest son's name is John Jones, because his father's was John Thomas; that the second son is called David Williams, because his grandfather was William Wynn, and that the girls are called indiscriminately by the names of Thomas and Jones. I have heard some of the Welsh chuckle over the way in which they have baffled the barristers at Caernarvon Assizes, denying the name under which they had been subpoenaed to give evidence, if they were unwilling witnesses. I could tell you of a great deal which is peculiar and wild in these true Welsh people, who are what I suppose we English were a century ago; but I must hasten on to my tale.

I have received great, true, beautiful kindness, from one of the members of the family of whom I just now spoke as living at Pen-Morfa; and when I found that they wished me to drink tea with them, I gladly did so, though my friend was the only one in the house who could speak English at all fluently. After tea, I went with them to see some of their friends; and it was then I saw the interiors of the houses of which I have spoken. It was an autumn evening; we left mellow sunset-light in the open air when we entered the houses, in which all seemed dark, save in the ruddy sphere of the firelight, for the windows were very small, and deep-set in the thick walls. Here were an old couple, who welcomed me in Welsh; and brought forth milk and oat-cake with patriarchal hospitality. Sons and daughters had married away from them; they lived alone; he was blind, or nearly so; and they sat one on each side of the fire, so old and so still (till we went in and broke the silence) that they seemed to be listening for death. At another house lived a woman stern and severe-looking. She was busy hiving a swarm of bees, alone and unassisted. I do not think my companion would have chosen to speak to her, but seeing her out in her hill-side garden, she made some inquiry in Welsh, which was answered in the most mournful tone I ever heard in my life; a voice of which the freshness and "timbre" had been choked up by tears long years ago. I asked who she was. I dare say the story is common enough, but the

sight of the woman, and her few words had impressed me. She had been the beauty of Pen-Morfa; had been in service; had been taken to London by the family whom she served; had come down, in a year or so, back to Pen-Morfa, her beauty gone into that sad, wild, despairing look, which I saw; and she about to become a mother. Her father had died during her absence, and left her a very little money; and after her child was born she took the little cottage where I saw her, and made a scanty living by the produce of her bees. She associated with no one. One event had made her savage and distrustful to her kind. She kept so much aloof that it was some time before it became known that her child was deformed, and had lost the use of its lower limbs. Poor thing! When I saw the mother, it had been for fifteen years bed-ridden. But go past when you would, in the night, you saw a light burning; it was often that of the watching mother, solitary and friendless, soothing the moaning child; or you might hear her crooning some old Welsh air, in hopes to still the pain with the loud monotonous music. Her sorrow was so dignified, and her mute endurance and her patient love won her such respect, that the neighbours would fain have been friends; but she kept alone and solitary. This is a most true story. I hope that woman and her child are dead now, and their souls above.

Another story which I heard of these old primitive dwellings I mean to tell at somewhat greater length:—

There are rocks high above Pen-Morfa; they are the same that hang over Trê-Madoc, but near Pen-Morfa they sweep away, and are lost in the plain. Everywhere they are beautiful. The great sharp ledges, which would otherwise look hard and cold, are adorned with the brightest-coloured moss, and the golden lichen. Close to, you see the scarlet leaves of the crane's-bill, and the tufts of purple heather, which fill up every cleft and cranny; but in the distance you see only the general effect of infinite richness of colour, broken here and there by great masses of ivy. At the foot of these rocks come a rich verdant meadow or two; and then you are at Pen-Morfa. The village well is sharp down under the rocks. There are one or

two large sloping pieces of stone in that last field, on the road leading to the well, which are always slippery; slippery in the summer's heat, almost as much as in the frost of winter, when some little glassy stream that runs over them is turned into a thin sheet of ice. Many, many years back — a lifetime ago — there lived in Pen-Morfa a widow and her daughter. Very little is required in those out-of-the-way Welsh villages. The wants of the people are very simple. Shelter, fire, a little oat-cake and buttermilk, and garden produce; perhaps some pork and bacon from the pig in winter; clothing, which is principally of home manufacture, and of the most enduring kind: these take very little money to purchase, especially in a district into which the large capitalists have not yet come, to buy up two or three acres of the peasants; and nearly every man about Pen-Morfa owned, at the time of which I speak, his dwelling and some land beside.

Eleanor Gwynn inherited the cottage (by the road-side, on the left-hand as you go from Trê-Madoc to Pen-Morfa), in which she and her husband had lived all their married life, and a small garden sloping southwards, in which her bees lingered before winging their way to the more distant heather. She took rank among her neighbours as the possessor of a moderate independence — not rich, and not poor. But the young men of Pen-Morfa thought her very rich in the possession of a most lovely daughter. Most of us know how very pretty Welsh women are; but from all accounts, Nest Gwynn (Nest, or Nesta, is the Welsh for Agnes) was more regularly beautiful than any one for miles around. The Welsh are still fond of triads, and "as beautiful as a summer's morning at sun-rise, as a white sea-gull on the green sea-wave, and as Nest Gwynn," is yet a saying in that district. Nest knew she was beautiful, and delighted in it. Her mother sometimes checked her in her happy pride, and sometimes reminded her that beauty was a great gift of God (for the Welsh are a very pious people); but when she began her little homily, Nest came dancing to her, and knelt down before her, and put her face up to be kissed, and so with a sweet interruption she stopped her mother's lips.

Her high spirits made some few shake their heads, and some called her a flirt and a coquette; for she could not help trying to please all, both old and young, both men and women. A very little from Nest sufficed for this; a sweet glittering smile, a word of kindness, a merry glance, or a little sympathy, all these pleased and attracted; she was like the fairy-gifted child, and dropped inestimable gifts. But some who had interpreted her smiles and kind words rather as their wishes led them than as they were really warranted, found that the beautiful, beaming Nest could be decided and saucy enough, and so they revenged themselves by calling her a flirt. Her mother heard it and sighed; but Nest only laughed.

It was her work to fetch water for the day's use from the well I told you about. Old people say it was the prettiest sight in the world to see her come stepping lightly and gingerly over the stones with the pail of water balanced on her head; she was too adroit to need to steady it with her hand. They say, now that they can afford to be charitable and speak the truth, that in all her changes to other people, there never was a better daughter to a widowed mother than Nest. There is a picturesque old farmhouse under Moel Gwynn, on the road from Trê-Madoc to Criccaeth, called by some Welsh name which I now forget; but its meaning in English is "The End of Time;" a strange, boding, ominous name. Perhaps the builder meant his work to endure till the end of time. I do not know; but there the old house stands, and will stand for many a year. When Nest was young, it belonged to one Edward Williams; his mother was dead, and people said he was on the look-out for a wife. They told Nest so, but she tossed her head and reddened, and said she thought he might look long before he got one; so it was not strange that one morning when she went to the well, one autumn morning when the dew lay heavy on the grass, and the thrushes were busy among the mountain-ash berries, Edward Williams happened to be there, on his way to the coursing match near, and somehow his grey-hounds threw her pail of water over in their romping play, and she was very long in filling it again; and when she came home she threw her arms round her mother's

neck, and in a passion of joyous tears told her that Edward Williams of The End of Time had asked her to marry him, and that she had said "Yes."

Eleanor Gwynn shed her tears too; but they fell quietly when she was alone. She was thankful Nest had found a protector — one suitable in age and apparent character, and above her in fortune; but she knew she should miss her sweet daughter in a thousand household ways; miss her in the evenings by the fireside; miss her when at night she wakened up with a start from a dream of her youth, and saw her fair face lying calm in the moonlight, pillow'd by her side. Then she forgot her dream, and blessed her child, and slept again. But who could be so selfish as to be sad when Nest was so supremely happy? She danced and sang more than ever; and then sat silent, and smiled to herself: if spoken to, she started and came back to the present with a scarlet blush, which told what she had been thinking of.

That was a sunny, happy, enchanted autumn. But the winter was nigh at hand; and with it came sorrow. One fine frosty morning, Nest went out with her lover — she to the well, he to some farming business, which was to be transacted at the little inn of Pen-Morfa. He was late for his appointment; so he left her at the entrance of the village, and hastened to the inn; and she, in her best cloak and new hat (put on against her mother's advice; but they were a recent purchase, and very becoming), went through the Dol Mawr, radiant with love and happiness. One who lived until lately, met her going down towards the well, that morning; and said he turned round to look after her, she seemed unusually lovely. He wondered at the time at her wearing her Sunday clothes; for the pretty, hooded blue-cloth cloak is kept among the Welsh women as a church and market garment, and not commonly used even on the coldest days of winter for such household errands as fetching water from the well. However, as he said, "It was not possible to look in her face, and 'fault' anything she wore." Down the sloping stones the girl went blithely with her pail. She filled it at the well: and then she took off her hat, tied the strings together, and

slung it over her arm; she lifted the heavy pail and balanced it on her head. But alas! in going up the smooth, slippery, treacherous rock, the encumbrance of her cloak — it might be such a trifle as her slung hat — something, at any rate, took away her evenness of poise; the freshet had frozen on the slanting stone, and was one coat of ice; poor Nest fell, and put out her hip. No more flushing rosy colour on that sweet face — no more look of beaming innocent happiness; — instead, there was deadly pallor, and filmy eyes, over which dark shades seemed to chase each other as the shoots of agony grew more and more intense. She screamed once or twice; but the exertion (involuntary, and forced out of her by excessive pain) overcame her, and she fainted. A child coming an hour or so afterwards on the same errand, saw her lying there, ice-glued to the stone, and thought she was dead. It flew crying back.

“Nest Gwynn is dead! Nest Gwynn is dead!” and, crazy with fear, it did not stop until it had hid its head in its mother’s lap. The village was alarmed, and all who were able went in haste towards the well. Poor Nest had often thought she was dying in that dreary hour; had taken fainting for death, and struggled against it; and prayed that God would keep her alive till she could see her lover’s face once more; and when she did see it, white with terror, bending over her, she gave a feeble smile, and let herself faint away into unconsciousness.

Many a month she lay on her bed unable to move. Sometimes she was delirious, sometimes worn-out into the deepest depression. Through all, her mother watched her with tenderest care. The neighbours would come and offer help. They would bring presents of country dainties; and I do not suppose that there was a better dinner than ordinary cooked in any household in Pen-Morfa parish, but a portion of it was sent to Eleanor Gwynn, if not for her sick daughter, to try and tempt her herself to eat and be strengthened; for to no one would she delegate the duty of watching over her child. Edward Williams

was for a long time most assiduous in his inquiries and attentions; but by-and-by (ah! you see the dark fate of poor Nest now), he slackened, so little at first that Eleanor blamed herself for her jealousy on her daughter's behalf, and chid her suspicious heart. But as spring ripened into summer, and Nest was still bedridden, Edward's coolness was visible to more than the poor mother. The neighbours would have spoken to her about it, but she shrunk from the subject as if they were probing a wound. "At any rate," thought she, "Nest shall be strong before she is told about it. I will tell lies — I shall be forgiven — but I must save my child; and when she is stronger, perhaps I may be able to comfort her. Oh! I wish she would not speak to him so tenderly and trustfully, when she is delirious. I could curse him when she does." And then Nest would call for her mother, and Eleanor would go, and invent some strange story about the summonses Edward had had to Caernarvon assizes, or to Harlech cattle market. But at last she was driven to her wits' end; it was three weeks since he had even stopped at the door to inquire, and Eleanor, mad with anxiety about her child, who was silently pining off to death for want of tidings of her lover, put on her cloak, when she had lulled her daughter to sleep one fine June evening, and set off to "The End of Time." The great plain which stretches out like an amphitheatre, in the half-circle of hills formed by the ranges of Moel Gwynn and the Trê-Madoc Rocks, was all golden-green in the mellow light of sunset. To Eleanor it might have been black with winter frost, she never noticed outward things till she reached The End of Time; and there, in the little farm-yard, she was brought to a sense of her present hour and errand by seeing Edward. He was examining some hay, newly stacked; the air was scented by its fragrance, and by the lingering sweetness of the breath of the cows. When Edward turned round at the footstep and saw Eleanor, he coloured and looked confused; however, he came forward to meet her in a cordial manner enough.

"It's a fine evening," said he. "How is Nest? But, indeed, you're being here is a sign she is better. Won't you come in and

sit down?" He spoke hurriedly, as if affecting a welcome which he did not feel.

"Thank you. I'll just take this milking-stool and sit down here. The open air is like balm after being shut up so long."

"It is a long time," he replied, "more than five months."

Mrs. Gwynn was trembling at heart. She felt an anger which she did not wish to show; for, if by any manifestations of temper or resentment she lessened or broke the waning thread of attachment which bound him to her daughter, she felt she should never forgive herself. She kept inwardly saying, "Patience, patience! he may be true and love her yet;" but her indignant convictions gave her words the lie.

"It's a long time, Edward Williams, since you've been near us to ask after Nest;" said she. "She may be better, or she may be worse, for aught you know." She looked up at him reproachfully, but spoke in a gentle quiet tone.

"I — you see the hay has been a long piece of work. The weather has been fractious — and a master's eye is needed. Besides," said he, as if he had found the reason for which he sought to account for his absence, "I have heard of her from Rowland Jones. I was at the surgery for some horse-medicine — he told me about her:" and a shade came over his face, as he remembered what the doctor had said. Did he think that shade would escape the mother's eye?

"You saw Rowland Jones! Oh, man-alive, tell me what he said of my girl! He'll say nothing to me, but just hems and haws the more I pray him. But you will tell me. You *must* tell me." She stood up and spoke in a tone of command, which his feeling of independence, weakened just then by an accusing conscience, did not enable him to resist. He strove to evade the question, however.

"It was an unlucky day that ever she went to the well!"

"Tell me what the doctor said of my child," repeated Mrs. Gwynn. "Will she live, or will she die?" He did not dare to disobey the imperious tone in which this question was put.

"Oh, she will live, don't be afraid. The doctor said she

would live." He did not mean to lay any peculiar emphasis on the word "live," but somehow he did, and she, whose every nerve vibrated with anxiety, caught the word.

"She will live!" repeated she. "But there is something behind. Tell me, for I will know. If you won't say, I'll go to Rowland Jones to-night and make him tell me what he has said to you."

There had passed something in this conversation between himself and the doctor, which Edward did not wish to have known; and Mrs. Gwynn's threat had the desired effect. But he looked vexed and irritated.

"You have such impatient ways with you, Mrs. Gwynn," he remonstrated.

"I am a mother asking news for my sick child," said she. "Go on. What did he say? She'll live—" as if giving the clue.

"She'll live, he has no doubt of that. But he thinks — now don't clench your hands so — I can't tell you if you look in that way; you are enough to frighten a man."

"I'm not speaking," said she in a low husky tone. "Never mind my looks: she'll live —"

"But she'll be a cripple for life. — There! you would have it out," said he, sulkily.

"A cripple for life," repeated she, slowly. "And I'm one-and-twenty years older than she is!" She sighed heavily.

"And, as we're about it, I'll just tell you what is in my mind," said he, hurried and confused. "I've a deal of cattle; and the farm makes heavy work, as much as an able healthy woman can do. So you see —" He stopped, whishing her to understand his meaning without words. But she would not. She fixed her dark eyes on him, as if reading his soul, till he flinched under her gaze.

"Well," said she, at length, "say on. Remember I've a deal of work in me yet, and what strength is mine is my daughter's."

"You're very good. But, altogether, you must be aware, Nest will never be the same as she was."

"And you 've not yet sworn in the face of God to take her for better, for worse; and, as she is worse" — she looked in his face, caught her breath, and went on — "as she is worse, why, you cast her off, not being church-tied to her. Though her body may be crippled, her poor heart is the same — alas! — and full of love for you. Edward, you don't mean to break it off because of our sorrows. You 're only trying me, I know," said she, as if begging him to assure her that her fears were false. "But, you see, I 'm a foolish woman — a poor foolish woman — and ready to take fright at a few words." She smiled up in his face; but it was a forced doubting smile, and his face still retained its sullen dogged aspect.

"Nay, Mrs. Gwynn," said he, "you spoke truth at first. Your own good sense told you Nest would never be fit to be any man's wife — unless indeed, she could catch Mr. Griffiths of Tynwntyrybwlc'h; he might keep her a carriage, may-be." Edward really did not mean to be unfeeling; but he was obtuse, and wished to carry off his embarrassment by a kind of friendly joke, which he had no idea would sting the poor mother as it did. He was startled at her manner.

"Put it in words like a man. Whatever you mean by my child, say it for yourself, and don't speak as if my good sense had told me any thing. I stand here, doubting my own thoughts, cursing my own fears. Don't be a coward. I ask you whether you, and Nest are troth-plight?"

"I am not a coward. Since you ask me, I answer, Nest, and I *were* troth-plight; but we *are* not. I cannot — no one would expect me to wed a cripple. It 's your own doing I 've told you now; I had made up mind, but I should have waited a bit before telling you."

"Very well," said she, and she turned to go away; but her wrath burst the flood-gates, and swept away discretion and fore-thought. She moved, and stood in the gateway. Her lips parted, but no sound came; with an hysterical motion she threw her arms suddenly up to heaven, as if bringing down lightning towards the grey old house to which she pointed as they fell, and then she spoke: —

"The widow's child is unfriended. As surely as the Saviour brought the son of a widow from death to life, for her tears and cries, so surely will God and His angels watch over my Nest, and avenge her cruel wrongs." She turned away weeping, and wringing her hands.

Edward went in-doors; he had no more desire to reckon his stores; he sat by the fire, looking gloomily at the red ashes. He might have been there half-an-hour or more, when some one knocked at the door. He would not speak. He wanted no one's company. Another knock sharp and loud. He did not speak. Then the visitor opened the door; and, to his surprise — almost to his affright — Eleanor Gwynn came in.

"I knew you were here. I knew you could not go out into the clear holy night, as if nothing had happened. Oh! did I curse you? If I did, I beg you to forgive me; and I will try and ask the Almighty to bless you, if you will but have a little mercy — a very little. It will kill my Nest if she knows the truth now — she is so very weak. Why, she cannot feed herself, she is so low and feeble. You would not wish to kill her, I think, Edward!" She looked at him as if expecting an answer; but he did not speak. She went down on her knees on the flags by him.

"You will give me a little time, Edward, to get her strong, won't you, now? I ask it on my bended knees! Perhaps, if I promise never to curse you again, you will come sometimes to see her, till she is well enough to know how all is over, and her heart's hopes crushed. Only say you'll come for a month, or so, as if you still loved her — the poor cripple — forlorn of the world. I'll get her strong, and not tax you long." Her tears fell too fast for her to go on.

"Get up, Mrs. Gwynn," Edward said. "Don't kneel to me. I have no objection to come and see Nest, now and then, so that all is clear between you and me. Poor thing! I'm sorry, as it happens, she's so taken up with the thought of me."

"It was likely, was not it? and you to have been her husband before this time, if — Oh, miserable me! to let my child go and dim her bright life! But you'll forgive me, and come

sometimes, just for a little quarter of an hour, once or twice a-week. Perhaps she'll be asleep sometimes when you call, and then, you know, you need not come in. If she were not so ill, I'd never ask you."

So low and humble was the poor widow brought, through her exceeding love for her daughter.

CHAPTER II.

NEST revived during the warm summer weather. Edward came to see her, and stayed the allotted quarter of an hour; but he dared not look her in the face. She was indeed a cripple: one leg was much shorter than the other, and she halted on a crutch. Her face, formerly so brilliant in colour, was wan and pale with suffering: the bright roses were gone, never to return. Her large eyes were sunk deep down in their hollow, cavernous sockets; but the light was in them still, when Edward came. Her mother dreaded her returning strength — dreaded, yet desired it; for the heavy burden of her secret was most oppressive at times, and she thought Edward was beginning to weary of his enforced attentions. One October evening she told her the truth. She even compelled her rebellious heart to take the cold, reasoning side of the question; and she told her child that her disabled frame was a disqualification for ever becoming a farmer's wife. She spoke hardly, because her inner agony and sympathy was such, she dared not trust herself to express the feelings that were rending her. But Nest turned away from cold reason; she revolted from her mother; she revolted from the world. She bound her sorrow tight up in her breast, to corrode and fester there.

Night after night, her mother heard her cries and moans — more pitiful, by far, than those wrung from her by bodily pain a year before; and night after night, if her mother spoke to soothe, she proudly denied the existence of any pain but what was physical, and consequent upon her accident.

"If she would but open her sore heart to me — to me, her mother," Eleanor wailed forth in prayer to God, "I would be

content. Once it was enough to have my Nest all my own. Then came love, and I knew it would never be as before; and then I thought the grief I felt, when Edward spoke to me, was as sharp a sorrow as could be; but this present grief, Oh Lord, my God, is worst of all; and Thou only, Thou, canst help!"

When Nest grew as strong as she was ever likely to be on earth, she was anxious to have as much labour as she could bear. She would not allow her mother to spare her anything. Hard work — bodily fatigue — she seemed to crave. She was glad when she was stunned by exhaustion into a dull insensibility of feeling. She was almost fierce when her mother, in those first months of convalescence, performed the household tasks which had formerly been hers; but she shrank from going out of doors. Her mother thought that she was unwilling to expose her changed appearance to the neighbours' remarks; but Nest was not afraid of that: she was afraid of their pity, as being one deserted and cast off. If Eleanor gave way before her daughter's imperiousness, and sat by while Nest "tore" about her work with the vehemence of a bitter heart, Eleanor could have cried, but she durst not; tears, or any mark of commiseration, irritated the crippled girl so much, she even drew away from caresses. Everything was to go on as it had been before she had known Edward; and so it did, outwardly; but they trod carefully, as if the ground on which they moved was hollow — deceptive. There was no more careless ease; every word was guarded, and every action planned. It was a dreary life to both. Once, Eleanor brought in a little baby, a neighbour's child, to try and tempt Nest out of herself, by her old love of children. Nest's pale face flushed as she saw the innocent child in her mother's arms; and, for a moment, she made as if she would have taken it; but then, she turned away, and hid her face behind her apron, and murmured, "I shall never have a child to lie in my breast, and call me mother!" In a minute she arose, with compressed and tightened lips, and went about her household work, without her noticing the cooing baby again, till Mrs. Gwynn, heart-sick at the failure of her little plan, took it back to its parents.

One day the news ran through Pen-Morfa that Edward Williams was about to be married. Eleanor had long expected this intelligence. It came upon her like no new thing; but it was the filling-up of her cup of woe. She could not tell Nest. She sat listlessly in the house, and dreaded that each neighbour who came in would speak about the village news. At last some one did. Nest looked round from her employment, and talked of the event with a kind of cheerful curiosity as to the particulars, which made her informant go away, and tell others that Nest had quite left off caring for Edward Williams. But when the door was shut, and Eleanor and she were left alone, Nest came and stood before her weeping mother like a stern accuser.

“Mother, why did not you let me die? Why did you keep me alive for this?” Eleanor could not speak, but she put her arms out towards her girl. Nest turned away, and Eleanor cried aloud in her soreness of spirit. Nest came again.

“Mother, I was wrong. You did your best. I don’t know how it is I am so hard and cold. I wish I had died when I was a girl and had a feeling heart.”

“Don’t speak so, my child. God has afflicted you sore, and your hardness of heart is but for a time. Wait a little. Don’t reproach yourself, my poor Nest. I understand your ways. I don’t mind them, love. The feeling heart will come back to you in time. Anyways, don’t think you’re grieving me, because, love, that may sting you when I’m gone; and I’m not grieved, my darling. Most times we’re very cheerful, I think.”

After this; mother, and child were drawn more together. But Eleanor had received her death from these sorrowful, hurrying events. She did not conceal the truth from herself; nor did she pray to live, as some months ago she had done, for her child’s sake; she had found out that she had no power to console the poor wounded heart. It seemed to her as if her prayers had been of no avail; and then she blamed herself for this thought.

There are many Methodist preachers in this part of Wales. There was a certain old man, named David Hughes, who was

held in peculiar reverence because he had known the great John Wesley. He had been captain of a Caernarvon slate-vessel; he had traded in the Mediterranean, and had seen strange sights. In those early days (to use his own expression) he had lived without God in the world; but he went to mock John Wesley, and was converted by the white-haired patriarch, and remained to pray. Afterwards he became one of the earnest, self-denying, much-abused band of itinerant preachers who went forth under Wesley's direction, to spread abroad a more earnest and practical spirit of religion. His rambles, and travels were of use to him. They extended his knowledge of the circumstances in which men are sometimes placed, and enlarged his sympathy with the tried and tempted. His sympathy, combined with the thoughtful experience of fourscore years, made him cognisant of many of the strange secrets of humanity; and when younger preachers upbraided the hard hearts they met with, and despaired of the sinners, he "suffered long, and was kind."

When Eleanor Gwynn lay low on her death-bed, David Hughes came to Pen-Morfa. He knew her history, and sought her out. To him she imparted the feelings I have described.

"I have lost my faith, David. The tempter has come, and I have yielded. I doubt if my prayers have been heard. Day, and night have I prayed that I might comfort my child in her great sorrow; but God has not heard me. She has turned away from me, and refused my poor love. I wish to die now; but I have lost my faith, and have no more pleasure in the thought of going to God. What must I do, David?"

She hung upon his answer; and it was long in coming.

"I am weary of earth," said she, mournfully, "and can I find rest in death even, leaving my child desolate and broken-hearted?"

"Eleanor," said David, "where you go all things will be made clear; and you will learn to thank God for the end of what now seems grievous and heavy to be borne. Do you think your agony has been greater than the awful agony in the Garden —

or your prayers more earnest than that which He prayed in that hour when the great drops of blood ran down his face like sweat? We know that God heard Him, although no answer came to Him through the dread silence of that night. God's times are not our times. I have lived eighty and one years, and never yet have I known an earnest prayer fall to the ground unheeded. In an unknown way, and when no one looked for it, may be, the answer came; a fuller, more satisfying answer than heart could conceive of, although it might be different to what was expected. Sister you are going where in His light you will see light; you will learn there that in very faithfulness He has afflicted you!"

"Go on — you strengthen me," said she.

After David Hughes left that day, Eleanor was calm as one already dead, and past mortal strife. Nest was awed by the change. No more passionate weeping — no more sorrow in the voice; though it was low and weak, it sounded with a sweet composure. Her last look was a smile; her last word a blessing.

Nest, tearless, streeked the poor worn body. She laid a plate with salt upon it on the breast, and lighted candles for the head and feet. It was an old Welsh custom; but when David Hughes came in, the sight carried him back to the time when he had seen the chapels in some old Catholic cathedral. Nest sat gazing on the dead with dry, hot eyes.

"She is dead," said David, solemnly, "she died in Christ. Let us bless God, my child. He giveth and He taketh away."

"She is dead," said Nest, "my mother is dead. No one loves me now."

She spoke as if she were thinking aloud, for she did not look at David, or ask him to be seated.

"No one loves you now? No human creature, you mean. You are not yet fit to be spoken to concerning God's infinite love. I, like you, will speak of love for human creatures. I tell you if no one loves you, it is time for you to begin to love." He spoke almost severely (if David Hughes ever did); for, to tell the truth, he was repelled by her hard rejection of her mother's tenderness, about which the neighbours had told him.

"Begin to love!" said she, her eyes flashing. "Have I not loved? Old man, you are dim, and worn-out. You do not remember what love is." She spoke with a scornful kind of pitying endurance. "I will tell you how I have loved by telling you the change it has wrought in me. I was once the beautiful Nest Gwynn; I am now a cripple, a poor, wan-faced cripple, old before my time. That is a change; at least people think so." She paused and then spoke lower. "I tell you, David Hughes, that outward change is as nothing compared to the change in my nature caused by the love I have felt—and have had rejected. I was gentle once, and if you spoke a tender word, my heart came towards you as natural as a little child goes to its mammy. I never spoke roughly, even to the dumb creatures, for I had a kind feeling for all. Of late (since I loved, old man), I have been cruel in my thoughts to every one. I have turned away from tenderness with bitter indifference, Listen!" she spoke in a hoarse whisper. "I will own it. I have spoken hardly to her," pointing towards the corpse. "Her who was ever patient, and full of love for me. She did not know," she muttered, "she is gone to the grave without knowing how I loved her—I had such strange, mad, stubborn pride in me."

"Come back, mother! Come back," said she, crying wildly to the still, solemn corpse; "come back as a spirit or a ghost—only come back, that I may tell you how I have loved you."

But the dead never come back.

The passionate adjuration ended in tears—the first she had shed. When they ceased, or were absorbed into long quivering sobs, David knelt down. Nest did not kneel, but bowed her head. He prayed, while his own tears fell fast. He rose up. They were both calm.

"Nest," said he, "your love has been the love of youth; passionate, wild, natural to youth. Henceforward you must love like Christ; without thought of self, or wish for return. You must take the sick and the weary to your heart, and love them. That love will lift you up above the storms of the world into God's own peace. The very vehemence of your nature

proves that you are capable of this. I do not pity you. You do not require pity. You are powerful enough to trample down your own sorrows into a blessing for others; and to others you will be a blessing; I see it before you; I see in it the answer to your mother's prayer."

The old man's dim eyes glittered as if they saw a vision; the fire-light sprang up, and glinted on his long white hair. Nest was awed as if she saw a prophet, and a prophet he was to her.

When next David Hughes came to Pen-Morfa, he asked about Nest Gwynn with a hovering doubt as to the answer. The inn-folk told him she was living still in the cottage, which was now her own.

"But would you believe it, David," said Mrs. Thomas, "she has gone and taken Mary Williams to live with her? You remember Mary Williams, I'm sure."

No! David Hughes remembered no Mary Williams at Pen-Morfa.

"You must have seen her, for I know you've called at Thomas Griffiths', where the parish boarded her?"

"You don't mean the half-witted woman — the poor crazy creature?"

"But I do!" said Mrs. Thomas.

"I have seen her sure enough, but I never thought of learning her name. And Nest Gwynn has taken her to live with her."

"Yes! I thought I should surprise you. She might have had many a decent girl for companion. My own niece, her that is an orphan, would have gone, and been thankful. Besides, Mary Williams is a regular savage at times; John Griffiths says there were days when he used to beat her till she howled again, and yet she would not do as he told her. Nay, once, he says, if he had not seen her eyes glare like a wild beast, from under the shadow of the table where she had taken shelter, and got pretty quickly out of her way, she would have flown upon him, and throttled him. He gave Nest fair warning of what she must expect, and he thinks some day she will be found murdered."

David Hughes thought awhile. "How came Nest to take her to live with her?" asked he.

"Well! Folk say John Griffiths did not give her enough to eat. Half-wits, they tell me, take more to feed them than others, and Eleanor Gwynn had given her oat-cake, and porridge a time or two, and most likely spoken kindly to her (you know Eleanor spoke kind to all), so some months ago, when John Griffiths had been beating her, and keeping her without food to try, and tame her, she ran away, and came to Nest's cottage in the dead of night, all shivering, and starved, for she did not know Eleanor was dead, and thought to meet with kindness from her, I've no doubt; and Nest remembered how her mother used to feed and comfort the poor idiot, and made her some gruel, and wrapped her up by the fire. And in the morning when John Griffiths came in search of Mary, he found her with Nest, and Mary wailed so piteously at the sight of him, that Nest went to the parish officers, and offered to take her to board with her for the same money they gave to him. John says he was right glad to be off his bargain."

David Hughes knew there was a kind of remorse which sought relief in the performance of the most difficult and repugnant tasks. He thought he could understand how, in her bitter repentance for her conduct towards her mother, Nest had taken in the first helpless creature that came seeking shelter in her name. It was not what he would have chosen, but he knew it was God that had sent the poor wandering idiot there.

He went to see Nest the next morning. As he drew near the cottage — it was summer time, and the doors and windows were all open — he heard an angry passionate kind of sound that was scarcely human. That sound prevented his approach from being heard; and standing at the threshold, he saw poor Mary Williams pacing backwards, and forwards in some wild mood. Nest, cripple as she was, was walking with her, speaking low soothing words, till the pace was slackened, and time and breathing was given to put her arm around the crazy woman's neck, and soothe her by this tender caress into the quiet luxury of tears; tears which give the hot brain relief. Then David

Hughes came in. His first words, as he took off his hat, standing on the lintel, were — “The peace of God be upon this house.” Neither he nor Nest recurred to the past; though solemn recollections filled their minds. Before he went, all three knelt and prayed; for, as Nest told him, some mysterious influence of peace came over the poor half-wit’s mind, when she heard the holy words of prayer; and often when she felt a paroxysm coming on, she would kneel and repeat a homily rapidly over, as if it were a charm to scare away the Demon in possession; sometimes, indeed, the control over herself requisite for this effort was enough to dispel the fluttering burst. When David rose up to go, he drew Nest to the door.

“You are not afraid, my child?” asked he.

“No,” she replied. “She is often very good and quiet. When she is not, I can bear it.”

“I shall see your face on earth no more,” said he. “God bless you!” He went on his way. Not many weeks after, David Hughes was borne to his grave.

The doors of Nest’s heart were opened — opened wide by the love she grew to feel for crazy Mary, so helpless, so friendless, so dependent upon her. Mary loved her back again, as a dumb animal loves its blind master. It was happiness enough to be near her. In general she was only too glad to do what she was bidden by Nest. But there were times when Mary was overpowered by the glooms and fancies of her poor disordered brain. Fearful times! No one knew how fearful. On those days, Nest warned the little children who loved to come, and play around her, that they must not visit the house. The signal was a piece of white linen hung out of a side-window. On those days the sorrowful, and sick waited in vain for the sound of Nest’s lame approach. But what she had to endure was only known to God, for she never complained. If she had given up the charge of Mary, or if the neighbours had risen out of love, and care for her life, to compel such a step, she knew what hard curses and blows — what starvation and misery, would await the poor creature.

She told of Mary’s docility, and her affection, and her inno-

cent little sayings; but she never told the details of the occasional days of wild disorder, and driving insanity.

Nest grew old before her time, in consequence of her accident. She knew that she was as old at fifty as many are at seventy. She knew it partly by the vividness with which the remembrance of the days of her youth came back to her mind, while the events of yesterday were dim, and forgotten. She dreamt of her girlhood, and youth. In sleep she was once more the beautiful Nest Gwynn, the admired of all beholders, the light-hearted girl, beloved by her mother. Little circumstances connected with those early days, forgotten since the very time when they occurred, came back to her mind, in her waking hours. She had a scar on the palm of her left hand, occasioned by the fall of a branch of a tree, when she was a child; it had not pained her since the first two days after the accident; but now it began to hurt her slightly; and clear in her ears was the crackling sound of the treacherous, rending wood; distinct before her rose the presence of her mother tenderly binding up the wound. With these remembrances came a longing desire to see the beautiful fatal well, once more before her death. She had never gone so far since the day when, by her fall there, she lost love, and hope, and her bright glad youth. She yearned to look upon its waters once again. This desire waxed as her life waxed. She told it to poor crazy Mary.

“Mary!” said she, “I want to go to the Rock Well. If you will help me, I can manage it. There used to be many a stone in the Dol Mawr on which I could sit and rest. We will go to-morrow morning before folks are astir.”

Mary answered briskly, “Up, up! To the Rock Well: Mary will go. Mary will go.” All day long she kept muttering to herself, “Mary will go.”

Nest had the happiest dream that night. Her mother stood beside her — not in the flesh, but in the bright glory of a blessed spirit. And Nest was no longer young — neither was she old — “they reckon not by days, nor years where she was gone to dwell;” and her mother stretched out her arms to her with a calm glad look of welcome. She awoke; the woodlark

was singing in the near copse — the little birds were astir, and rustling in their leafy nests. Nest arose, and called Mary. The two set out through the quiet lane. They went along slowly, and silently. With many a pause they crossed the broad Dol Mawr; and carefully descended the sloping stones, on which no trace remained of the hundreds of feet that had passed over them since Nest was last there. The clear water sparkled and quivered in the early sun-light, the shadows of the birch-leaves were stirred on the ground; the ferns — Nest could have believed that they were the very same ferns which she had seen thirty years before, hung wet and dripping where the water over-flowed — a thrush chanted matins from a holly bush near — and the running stream made a low, soft, sweet accompaniment. All was the same; Nature was as fresh and young as ever. It might have been yesterday that Edward Williams had overtaken her, and told her his love — the thought of his words — his handsome looks — (he was a grey hard-featured man by this time), and then she recalled the fatal wintry morning when joy, and youth had fled; and as she remembered that faintness of pain, a new, a real faintness — no echo of the memory — came over her. She leant her back against a rock, without a moan or sigh, and died! She found immortality by the well-side, instead of her fragile perishing youth. She was so calm, and placid that Mary (who had been dipping her fingers in the well, to see the waters drop off in the gleaming sun-light), thought she was asleep, and for some time continued her amusement in silence. At last she turned, and said,

“Mary is tired. Mary wants to go home.” Nest did not speak, though the idiot repeated her plaintive words. She stood and looked till a strange terror came over her — a terror too mysterious to be borne.

“Mistress, wake! Mistress, wake!” she said, wildly, shaking the form.

But Nest did not awake. And the first person who came to the well that morning found crazy Mary sitting, awe-struck, by the poor dead Nest. They had to get the poor creature away by force, before they could remove the body.

Mary is in Trê-Madoc workhouse; they treat her pretty kindly, and in general she is good and tractable. Occasionally the old paroxysms come on; and for a time she is unmanageable. But some one thought of speaking to her about Nest. She stood arrested at the name; and since then, it is astonishing to see what efforts she makes to curb her insanity; and when the dread time is past, she creeps up to the matron, and says, "Mary has tried to be good. Will God let her go to Nest now?"

THE HEART OF JOHN MIDDLETON.

I WAS born at Sawley, where the shadow of Pendle Hill falls at sunrise. I suppose Sawley sprang up into a village in the time of the monks, who had an abbey there. Many of the cottages are strange old places; others again are built of the abbey stones, mixed up with the shale from the neighbouring quarries; and you may see many a quaint bit of carving worked into the walls, or forming the lintels of the doors. There is a row of houses, built still more recently, where one Mr. Peel came to live there for the sake of the water-power, and gave the place a fillip into something like life; though a different kind of life, as I take it, from the grand slow ways folks had when the monks were about.

Now it was — six o'clock, ring the bell, throng to the factory; sharp home at twelve; and even at night, when work was done, we hardly knew how to walk slowly, we had been so hustled all day long. I can't recollect the time when I did not go to the factory. My father used to drag me there when I was quite a little fellow, in order to wind reels for him. I never remember my mother. I should have been a better man than I have been, if I had only had a notion of the sound of her voice, or the look on her face.

My father and I lodged in the house of a man, who also worked in the factory. We were sadly thronged in Sawley, so many people came from different parts of the country to earn a livelihood at the new work; and it was some time before the row of cottages I have spoken of could be built. While they were building my father was turned out of his lodgings for drinking and being disorderly, and he, and I slept in the brick-kiln; that is to say, when we did sleep o' nights, but, often and

often, we went poaching; and many a hare, and pheasant have I rolled up in clay, and roasted in the embers of the kiln. Then, as followed to reason, I was drowsy next day, over my work; but father had no mercy on me for sleeping, for all he knew the cause of it, but kicked me where I lay, a heavy lump on the factory floor, and cursed and swore at me till I got up for very fear, and to my winding again. But when his back was turned I paid him off with heavier curses than he had given me, and longed to be a man that I might be revenged on him. The words I then spoke I would not now dare to repeat; and worse than hating words, a hating heart went with them. I forget the time when I did not know how to hate. When I first came to read, and learnt about Ishmael, I thought I must be of his doomed race, for my hand was against every man, and every man's against me. But I was seventeen or more before I cared for my book enough to learn to read.

After the row of works was finished, father took one, and set up for himself, in letting lodgings. I can't say much for the furnishing; but there was plenty of straw, and we kept up good fires; and there is a set of people who value warmth above everything. The worst lot about the place lodged with us. We used to have a supper in the middle of the night; there was game enough, or if there was not game, there was poultry to be had for the stealing. By day we all made a show of working in the factory. By night we feasted and drank.

Now this web of my life was black enough, and coarse enough; but by-and-by, a little golden filmy thread began to be woven in; the dawn of God's mercy was at hand.

One blowy October morning, as I sauntered lazily along to the mill, I came to the little wooden bridge over a brook that falls into the Bribble. On the plank there stood a child, balancing the pitcher on her head, with which she had been to fetch water. She was so light on her feet that, had it not been for the weight of the pitcher, I almost believe the wind would have taken her up, and wafted her away as it carries off a blow-ball in seed-time; her blue cotton dress was blown before her, as if she were spreading her wings for a flight; she turned her

face round, as if to ask me for something, but when she saw who it was she hesitated, for I had a bad name in the village, and I doubt not she had been warned against me. But her heart was too innocent to be distrustful; so she said to me timidly,

“Please, John Middleton, will you carry me this heavy jug just over the bridge?”

It was the very first time I had ever been spoken to gently. I was ordered here, and there by my father and his rough companions; I was abused, and cursed by them if I failed in doing what they wished; if I succeeded, there came no expression of thanks or gratitude. I was informed of facts necessary for me to know. But the gentle words of request or entreaty were afore-time unknown to me, and now their tones fell on my ear soft and sweet as a distant peal of bells. I wished that I knew how to speak properly in reply; but though we were of the same standing as regarded worldly circumstances, there was some mighty difference between us, which made me unable to speak in her language of soft words and modest entreaty. There was nothing for me, but to take up the pitcher in a kind of gruff, shy silence, and carry it over the bridge as she had asked me. When I gave it her back again, she thanked me and tripped away, leaving me, word-less, gazing after her like an awkward lout as I was. I knew well enough who she was. She was grandchild to Eleanor Hadfield, an aged woman, who was reputed as a witch by my father, and his set, for no other reason, that I can make out, than her scorn, dignity, and fearlessness of rancour. It was true we often met her in the grey dawn of the morning when we returned from poaching, and my father used to curse her, under his breath, for a witch, such as were burnt long ago, on Pendle Hill top; but I had heard that Eleanor was a skilful sick nurse, and ever ready to give her services to those who were ill; and I believe that she had been sitting up through the night (the night that we had been spending under the wild heavens, in deeds as wild), with those who were appointed to die. Nelly was her orphan granddaughter; her little hand-maiden; her treasure; her one ewe lamb. Many, and many a day have I watched by

the brook-side, hoping that some happy gust of wind, coming with opportune bluster down the hollow of the dale, might make me necessary once more to her. I longed to hear her speak to me again. I said the words she had used to myself, trying to catch her tone; but the chance never came again. I do not know that she ever knew how I watched for her there. I found out that she went to school, and nothing would serve me but that I must go too. My father scoffed at me; I did not care. I knew nought of what reading was, nor that it was likely that I should be laughed at; I, a great hulking lad of seventeen or upwards, for going to learn my A, B, C, in the midst of a crowd of little ones. I stood just this way in my mind. Nelly was at school; it was the best place for seeing her, and hearing her voice again. Therefore I would go too. My father talked, and swore, and threatened, but I stood to it. He said I should leave school, weary of it in a month. I swore a deeper oath than I like to remember, that I would stay a year, and come out a reader and a writer. My father hated the notion of folks learning to read, and said it took all the spirit out of them; besides, he thought he had a right to every penny of my wages, and though, when he was in good humour, he might have given me many a jug of ale, he grudged my two-pence a week for schooling. However, to school I went. It was a different place to what I had thought it before I went inside. The girls sat on one side, and the boys on the other; so I was not near Nelly. She too was in the first class; I was put with the little toddling things that could hardly run alone. The master sat in the middle, and kept pretty strict watch over us. But I could see Nelly, and hear her read her chapter; and even when it was one with a long list of hard names, such as the master was very fond of giving her, to show how well she could hit them off without spelling, I thought I had never heard a prettier music. Now, and then she read other things. I did not know what they were, true or false; but I listened because she read; and, by-and-by, and began to wonder. I remember the first word I ever spoke to her was to ask her (as we were coming out of school) who was the Father of whom she had been reading, for when she said the words "Our Father," her voice

dropped into a soft, holy kind of low sound, which struck me more than any loud reading, it seemed so loving and tender. When I asked her this, she looked at me with her great blue wondering eyes, at first shocked; and then, as it were, melted down into pity and sorrow, she said in the same way, below her breath, in which she read the words "Our Father,"

"Don't you know? It is God."

"God?"

"Yes; the God that grandmother tells me about."

"Tell me what she says, will you?" So we sat down on the hedge-bank, she a little above me, while I looked up into her face, and she told me all the holy texts her grandmother had taught her, as explaining all that could be explained of the Almighty. I listened in silence, for indeed I was overwhelmed with astonishment. Her knowledge was principally rote-knowledge; she was too young for much more; but we, in Lancashire, speak a rough kind of Bible language, and the texts seemed very clear to me. I rose up, dazed and overpowered. I was going away in silence, when I bethought me of my manners, and turned back, and said "Thank you," for the first time I ever remember saying it in my life. That was a great day for me, in more ways than one.

I was always one who could keep very steady to an object when once I had set it before me. My object was to know Nelly. I was conscious of nothing more. But it made me regardless of all other things. The master might scold, the little ones might laugh; I bore it all without giving it a second thought. I kept to my year, and came out a reader and writer; more, however, to stand well in Nelly's good opinion, than because of my oath. About this time, my father committed some bad cruel deed, and had to fly the country. I was glad he went; for I had never loved, or cared for him, and wanted to shake myself clear of his set. But it was no easy matter. Honest folk stood aloof; only bad men held out their arms to me with a welcome. Even Nelly seemed to have a mixture of fear now with her kind ways towards me. I was the son of John Middleton, who, if he were caught, would be hung at Lancaster Castle. I thought she

looked at me sometimes with a sort of sorrowful horror. Others were not forbearing enough to keep their expression of feeling confined to looks. The son of the overlooker at the mill never ceased twitting me with my father's crime; he now brought up his poaching against him, though I knew very well how many a good supper he himself had made on game which had been given him to make him and his father wink at late hours in the morning. And how were such as my father to come honestly by game?

This lad, Dick Jackson, was the bane of my life. He was a year or two older than I was, and had much power over the men who worked at the mill, as he could report to his father what he chose. I could not always hold my peace when he "threaped" me with my father's sins, but gave it him back sometimes in a storm of passion. It did me no good; only threw me farther from the company of better men, who looked aghast and shocked at the oaths I poured out — blasphemous words learnt in my childhood, which I could not forget now that I would fain have purified myself of them; while all the time Dick Jackson stood by, with a mocking smile of intelligence; and when I had ended, breathless and weary with spent passion, he would turn to those whose respect I longed to earn, and ask if I were not a worthy son of my father, and likely to tread in his steps. But this smiling indifference of his to my miserable vehemence was not all, though it was the worst part of his conduct, for it made the rankling hatred grow up in my heart, and overshadow it like the great gourd-tree of the prophet Jonah. But his was a merciful shade, keeping out the burning sun; mine blighted what it fell upon.

What Dick Jackson did besides, was this. His father was a skilful overlooker, and a good man; Mr. Peel valued him so much, that he was kept on, although his health was failing; and when he was unable, through illness, to come to the mill, he deputed his son to watch over, and report the men. It was too much power for one so young — I speak it calmly now. Whatever Dick Jackson became, he had strong temptations when he was young, which will be allowed for hereafter. But

at the time of which I am telling, my hate raged like a fire. I believed that he was the one sole obstacle to my being received as fit to mix with good, and honest men. I was sick of crime, and disorder, and would fain have come over to a different kind of life, and have been industrious, sober, honest, and right-spoken, (I had no idea of higher virtue then), and at every turn Dick Jackson met me with his sneers. I have walked the night through, in the old abbey field, planning how I could out-wit him, and win men's respect in spite of him. The first time I ever prayed, was underneath the silent stars, kneeling by the old abbey walls, throwing up my arms, and asking God for the power of revenge upon him.

I had heard that if I prayed earnestly, God would give me what I asked for, and I looked upon it as a kind of chance for the fulfilment of my wishes. If earnestness would have won the boon for me, never were wicked words so earnestly spoken. And oh, later on, my prayer was heard, and my wish granted! All this time I saw little of Nelly. Her grandmother was failing, and she had much to do in-doors. Besides, I believed I had read her looks aright, when I took them to speak of aversion; and I planned to hide myself from her sight, as it were, until I could stand upright before men, with fearless eyes, dreading no face of accusation. It was possible to acquire a good character; I would do it—I did it: but no one brought up among respectable untempted people can tell the unspeakable hardness of the task. In the evenings I would not go forth among the village throng; for the acquaintances that claimed me were my father's old associates, who would have been glad enough to enlist a strong young man like me in their projects; and the men who would have shunned me and kept aloof, were the steady and orderly. So I staid in-doors, and practised myself in reading. You will say, I should have found it easier to earn a good character away from Sawley, at some place where neither I nor my father was known. So I should; but it would not have been the same thing to my mind. Besides, representing all good men, all goodness to me, in Sawley Nelly lived. In her sight I would work out my life, and fight my way upwards to men's re-

spect. Two years passed on. Every day I strove fiercely; every day my struggles were made fruitless by the son of the overlooker; and I seemed but where I was — but where I must ever be esteemed by all who knew me — but as the son of the criminal — wild, reckless, ripe for crime myself. Where was the use of my reading and writing? These acquirements were disregarded and scouted by those among whom I was thrust back to take my portion. I could have read any chapter in the Bible now; and Nelly seemed as though she would never know it. I was driven in upon my books; and few enough of them I had. The pedlars brought them round in their packs, and I bought what I could. I had the "Seven Champions," and the "Pilgrim's Progress;" and both seemed to me equally wonderful, and equally founded on fact. I got Byron's "Narrative," and Milton's "Paradise Lost;" but I lacked the knowledge which would give a clue to all. Still they afforded me pleasure, because they took me out of myself, and made me forget my miserable position, and made me unconscious (for the time at least,) of my one great passion of hatred against Dick Jackson.

When Nelly was about seventeen her grandmother died. I stood aloof in the church-yard, behind the great yew-tree, and watched the funeral. It was the first religious service that ever I heard; and, to my shame, as I thought, it affected me to tears. The words seemed so peaceful and holy that I longed to go to church, but I durst not, because I had never been. The parish church was at Bolton, far enough away to serve as an excuse for all who did not care to go. I heard Nelly's sobs filling up every pause in the clergyman's voice; and every sob of hers went to my heart. She passed me on her way out of the churchyard; she was so near I might have touched her; but her head was hanging down, and I durst not speak to her. Then the question arose, what was to become of her? She must earn her living; was it to be as a farm-servant, or by working at the mill? I knew enough of both kinds of life to make me tremble for her. My wages were such as to enable me to marry, if I chose; and I never thought of woman, for my wife, but Nelly. Still I would

not have married her now, if I could; for, as yet, I had not risen up to the character which I determined it was fit that Nelly's husband should have. When I was rich in good report, I would come forwards, and take my chance; but until then, I would hold my peace. I had faith in the power of my long-continued dogged breasting of opinion. Sooner or later it must, it should, yield, and I be received among the ranks of good men. But, meanwhile, what was to become of Nelly? I reckoned up my wages; I went to inquire what the board of a girl would be, who should help her in her household work, and live with her as a daughter, at the house of one of the most decent women of the place; she looked at me suspiciously. I kept down my temper, and told her I would never come near the place; that I would keep away from that end of the village, and that the girl for whom I made the inquiry should never know but what the parish paid for her keep. It would not do; she suspected me; but I know I had power over myself to have kept my word; and besides, I would not, for worlds have had Nelly put under any obligation to me, which should speck the purity of her love, or dim it by a mixture of gratitude, — the love that I craved to earn, not for my money, not for my kindness, but for myself. I heard that Nelly had met with a place in Bolland; and I could see no reason why I might not speak to her once before she left our neighbourhood. I meant it to be a quiet friendly telling her of my sympathy in her sorrow. I felt I could command myself. So, on the Sunday before she was to leave Sawley, I waited near the wood-path, by which I knew that she would return from afternoon church. The birds made such a melodious warble, such a busy sound among the leaves, that I did not hear approaching footsteps, till they were close at hand; and then there were sounds of two persons' voices. The wood was near that part of Sawley where Nelly was staying with friends; the path through it led to their house, and theirs only, so I knew it must be she, for I had watched her setting out to church alone.

But who was the other?

The blood went to my heart and head, as if I were shot, when

I saw that it was Dick Jackson. Was this the end of it all? In the steps of sin which my father had trode, I would rush to my death and my doom. Even where I stood I longed for a weapon to slay him. How dared he come near my Nelly? She too,—I thought her faithless, and forgot how little I had ever been to her in outward action; how few words, and those how uncouth, I had ever spoken to her; and I hated her for a traitress. These feelings passed through me before I could see, my eyes and head were so dizzy and blind. When I looked I saw Dick Jackson holding her hand, and speaking quick and low, and thick, as a man speaks in great vehemence. She seemed white and dismayed; but all at once, at some word of his (and what it was she never would tell me), she looked as though she defied a fiend, and wrenched herself out of his grasp. He caught hold of her again, and began once more the thick whisper that I loathed. I could bear it no longer, nor did I see why I should. I stepped out from behind the tree where I had been lying. When she saw me, she lost her look of one strung up to desperation, and came and clung to me; and I felt like a giant in strength, and might. I held her with one arm, but I did not take my eyes off him; I felt as if they blazed down into his soul, and scorched him up. He never spoke, but tried to look as though he defied me; at last his eyes fell before mine, I dared not speak; for the old horrid oaths thronged up to my mouth; and I dreaded giving them way, and terrifying my poor trembling Nelly.

At last he made to go past me; I drew her out of the pathway. By instinct she wrapped her garments round her, as if to avoid his accidental touch; and he was stung by this, I suppose — I believe — to the mad, miserable revenge he took. As my back was turned to him, in an endeavour to speak some words to Nelly that might soothe her into calmness, she, who was looking after him, like one fascinated with terror, saw him take a sharp shaley stone, and aim it at me. Poor darling! she clung round me as a shield, making her sweet body into a defence for mine. It hit her, and she spoke no word, kept back her cry of pain, but fell at my feet in a swoon. He — the coward! — ran

off as soon as he saw what he had done. I was with Nelly alone in the green gloom of the wood. The quivering and leaf-tinted light made her look as if she were dead. I carried her, not knowing if I bore a corpse or not, to her friend's house. I did not stay to explain, but ran madly for the doctor.

Well! I cannot bear to recur to that time again. Five weeks I lived in the agony of suspense; from which my only relief was in laying savage plans for revenge. If I hated him before, what think ye I did now? It seemed as if earth could not hold us twain, but that one of us must go down to Gehenna. I could have killed him; and would have done it without a scruple, but that seemed too poor and bold a revenge. At length — oh! the weary waiting — oh! the sickening of my heart — Nelly grew better — as well as she was ever to grow. The bright colour had left her cheek; the mouth quivered with repressed pain, the eyes were dim with tears that agony had forced into them; and I loved her a thousand times better and more than when she was bright and blooming! What was best of all, I began to perceive that she cared for me. I know her grandmother's friends warned her against me, and told her I came of a bad stock; but she had passed the point where remonstrance from bystanders can take effect — she loved me as I was, a strange mixture of bad and good, all unworthy of her. We spoke together now, as those do whose lives are bound up in each other. I told her I would marry her as soon as she had recovered her health. Her friends shook their heads; but they saw she would be unfit for farm-service or heavy work, and they perhaps thought, as many a one does, that a bad husband was better than none at all. Anyhow we were married; and I learnt to bless God for my happiness, so far beyond my deserts. I kept her like a lady. I was a skilful workman, and earned good wages; and every want she had I tried to gratify. Her wishes were few and simple enough, poor Nelly! If they had been ever so fanciful, I should have had my reward in the new feeling of the holiness of home. She could lead me as a little child, with the charm of her gentle voice, and her ever-kind words. She would plead for all when I was full of anger and passion; only

Dick Jackson's name passed never between our lips during all that time. In the evening she lay back in her bee-hive chair, and read to me. I think I see her now, pale and weak, with her sweet young face, lighted by her holy earnest eyes, telling me of the Saviour's life and death, till they were filled with tears. I longed to have been there, to have avenged him on the wicked Jews. I liked Peter the best of all the disciples. But I got the Bible myself, and read the mighty act of God's vengeance in the Old Testament, with a kind of triumphant faith, that, sooner or later, He would take my cause in hand, and revenge me on mine enemy.

In a year or so, Nelly had a baby, — a little girl, with eyes just like hers, that looked with a grave openness right into yours. Nelly recovered but slowly. It was just before winter, the cotton-crop had failed, and master had to turn off many hands. I thought I was sure of being kept on, for I had earned a steady character, and did my work well; but once again it was permitted that Dick Jackson should do me wrong. He induced his father to dismiss me among the first in my branch of the business; and there was I just before winter set in, with a wife and new-born child, and a small enough store of money to keep body and soul together, till I could get to work again. All my savings had gone by Christmas Eve, and we sat in the house, foodless for the morrow's festival. Nelly looked pinched and worn; the baby cried for a larger supply of milk than its poor starving mother could give it. My right hand had not forgot its cunning; and I went out once more to my poaching. I knew where the gang met; and I knew what a welcome back I should have, — a far warmer and more hearty welcome than good men had given me when I tried to enter their ranks. On the road to the meeting-place I fell in with an old man, — one who had been a companion to my father in his early days.

“What, lad!” said he, “art thou turning back to the old trade? It's the better business now, that cotton has failed.”

“Ay,” said I, “cotton is starving us outright. A man may

bear a deal himself, but he'll do aught bad and sinful to save his wife and child."

"Nay, lad," said he, "poaching is not sinful; it goes against man's laws, but not against God's."

I was too weak to argue or talk much. I had not tasted food for two days. But I murmured, "At any rate, I trusted to have been clear of it for the rest of my days. It led my father wrong at first. I have tried and I have striven. Now I give all up. Right or wrong shall be the same to me. Some are foredoomed; and so am I." And as I spoke, some notion of the futurity that would separate Nelly, the pure and holy from me, the reckless and desperate one, came over me with an irrepressible burst of anguish. Just then the bells of Bolton-in-Bolland struck up a glad peal, which came over the woods, in the solemn midnight air, like the sons of the morning shouting for joy,—they seemed so clear and jubilant. It was Christmas Day: and I felt like an outcast from the gladness and the salvation. Old Jonah spoke out:

"Yon's the Christmas bells. I say, Johnny, my lad, I've no notion of taking such a spiritless chap as thou into the thick of it, with thy rights, and thy wrongs. We don't trouble ourselves with such fine lawyer's stuff, and we bring down the 'varmint' all the better. Now, I'll not have the in our gang, for thou art not up to the fun, and thou'd hang fire when the time came to be doing. But I've a shrewd guess that plaguy wife and child of thine are at the bottom of thy half-and-half joining. Now, I was thy father's friend afore he took to them helter-skelter ways; and I've five shillings and a neck of mutton at thy service. I'll not list a fasting man; but if thou'l come to us with a full stomach, and say, 'I like your life, my lads, and I'll make one of you with pleasure, the first shiny night,' why, we'll give you a welcome and a half; but, to-night, make no more ado but turn back with me for the mutton and the money."

I was not proud; nay, I was most thankful. I took the meat, and boiled some broth for my poor Nelly. She was in a sleep, or a faint, I know not which; but I roused her, and held her up in

bed, and fed her with a teaspoon, and the light came back to her eyes, and the faint moonlight smile to her lips; and when she had ended, she said her innocent grace, and fell asleep with her baby on her breast. I sat over the fire, and listened to the bells, as they swept past my cottage on the gusts of the wind. I longed and yearned for the second coming of Christ, of which Nelly had told me. The world seemed cruel, and hard, and strong — too strong for me; and I prayed to cling to the hem of His garment, and be borne over the rough places when I fainted and bled, and found no man to pity or help me, but poor old Jonah, the publican and sinner. All this time my own woes and my own self were uppermost in my mind, as they are in the minds of most who have been hardly used. As I thought of my wrongs, and my sufferings, my heart burned against Dick Jackson; and as the bells rose and fell, so my hopes waxed and waned, that in those mysterious days, of which they were both the remembrance, and the prophecy, he would be purged from off the earth. I took Nelly's Bible, and turned, not to the gracious story of the Saviour's birth, but to the records of the former days, when the Jews took such wild revenge upon all their opponents. I was a Jew, — a leader among the people. Dick Jackson was as Pharaoh, as the King Agag, who walked delicately, thinking the bitterness of death was past, — in short, he was the conquered enemy, over whom I gloated, with my Bible in my hand — that Bible which contained our Saviour's words on the Cross. As yet, those words seemed faint, and meaningless to me, like a tract of country seen in the starlight haze; while the histories of the Old Testament were grand, and distinct in the blood-red colour of sun-set. By, and by that night passed into day; and little piping voices came round, carol-singing. They wakened Nelly. I went to her as soon as I heard her stirring.

“Nelly,” said I, “there's money and food in the house; I will be off to Padiham seeking work, while thou hast something to go upon.”

“Not to day,” said she; “stay to day with me. If thou wouldst only go to church with me this once” — for you see I

had never been inside a church but when we were married, and she was often praying me to go; and now she looked at me, with a sigh just creeping forth from her lips, as she expected a refusal. But I did not refuse. I had been kept away from church before because I dared not go; and now I was desperate, and dared do anything. If I did look like a heathen in the face of all men, why I was a heathen in my heart; for I was falling back into all my evil ways. I had resolved, if my search of work at Padiham should fail, I would follow my father's footsteps, and take with my own right hand and by my strength of arm what it was denied me to obtain honestly. I had resolved to leave Sawley, where a curse seemed to hang over me; so what did it matter if I went to church, all unbeknowing what strange ceremonies were there performed? I walked thither as a sinful man — sinful in my heart. Nelly hung on my arm, but even she could not get me to speak. I went in; she found my places, and pointed to the words, and looked up into my eyes with hers, so full of faith and joy. But I saw nothing but Richard Jackson — I heard nothing but his loud nasal voice, making response, and desecrating all the holy words. He was in broadcloth of the best — I in my fustian jacket. He was prosperous, and glad — I was starving, and desperate. Nelly grew pale as she saw the expression in my eyes; and she prayed ever, and ever more fervently as the thought of me tempted by the Devil even at that very moment came more fully before her.

By, and by she forgot even me, and laid her soul bare before God, in a long silent weeping prayer, before we left the church. Nearly all had gone — and I stood by her, unwilling to disturb her, unable to join her. At last she rose up, heavenly calm. She took my arm, and we went home through the woods, where all the birds seemed tame and familiar. Nelly said she thought all living creatures knew it was Christmas Day, and rejoiced, and were loving together. I believed it was the frost that had tamed them; and I felt the hatred that was in me, and knew that whatever else was loving, I was full of malice and uncharitableness, nor did I wish to be otherwise. That afternoon

I bade Nelly and our child farewell, and tramped to Padiham. I got work — how I hardly know; for stronger and stronger came the force of the temptation to lead a wild, free life of sin; legions seemed whispering evil thoughts to me, and only my gentle, pleading Nelly to pull me back from the great gulph. However, as I said before, I got work, and set off homewards to move my wife, and child to that neighbourhood. I hated Sawley, and yet I was fiercely indignant to leave it; with my purposes unaccomplished. I was still an outcast from the more respectable, who stood afar off from such as I; and mine enemy lived and flourished in their regard. Padiham, however, was not so far away, for me to despair — to relinquish my fixed determination. It was on the eastern side of the great Pendle Hill; ten miles away, may-be. Hate will overleap a greater obstacle.

I took a cottage on the Fell, high up on the side of the hill. We saw a long black moorland slope before us, and then the grey stone houses of Padiham, over which a black cloud hung; different from the blue wood or turf smoke about Sawley. The wild winds came down and whistled round our house many a day when all was still below. But I was happy then. I rose in men's esteem. I had work in plenty. Our child lived, and thrrove. But I forgot not our country proverb: "Keep a stone in thy pocket for seven years: turn it, and keep it seven years more; but have it ever ready to cast at thine enemy when the time comes."

One day a fellow-workman asked me to go to a hill-side preaching. Now, I never cared to go to church; but there was something newer and freer in the notion of praying to God right under His great dome; and the open air had had a charm to me ever since my wild boyhood. Besides, they said these ranters had strange ways with them, and I thought it would be fun to see their way of setting about it; and this ranter of all others had made himself a name in our parts. Accordingly we went; it was a fine summer's evening, after work was done. When we got to the place we saw such a crowd as I never saw before, men, women, and children; all ages were gathered together,

and sat on the hill-side. They were care-worn, diseased, sorrowful, criminal; all that was told on their faces, which were hard, and strongly marked. In the midst, standing in a cart, was the ranter. When I first saw him, I said to my companion, "Lord! What a little man to make all this bother! I could trip him up with one of my fingers;" and then I sat down, and looked about me a bit. All eyes were fixed on the preacher; and I turned mine upon him too. He began to speak; it was in no fine-drawn language, but in words such as we heard every day of our lives, and about things we did every day of our lives. He did not call our short-comings pride or worldliness, or pleasure-seeking, which would have given us no clear notion of what he meant, but he just told us outright what we did; and then he gave it a name, and said that it was accursed,— and that we were lost if we went on so doing.

By this time the tears and sweat were running down his face; he was wrestling for our souls. We wondered how he knew our innermost lives as he did, for each one of us saw his sin set before him in plain-spoken words. Then he cried out to us to repent; and spoke first to us, and then to God, in a way that would have shocked many — but it did not shock me. I liked strong things; and I liked the bare full truth: and I felt brought nearer to God in that hour — the summer darkness creeping over us, and one after one the stars coming out above us, like the eyes of the angels watching us — than I had ever done in my life before. When he had brought us to our tears and sighs, he stopped his loud voice of upbraiding, and there was a hush, only broken by sobs and quivering moans, in which I heard through the gloom the voices of strong men in anguish and supplication, as well as the shriller tones of women. Suddenly he was heard again; by this time we could not see him; but his voice was now tender as the voice of an angel, and he told us of Christ and implored us to come to Him. I never heard such passionate entreaty. He spoke as if he saw Satan hovering near us in the dark dense night, and as if our only safety lay in a very present coming to the Cross; I believe he did see Satan; we know he haunts the desolate old hills, awaiting his time, and

now or never it was with many a soul. At length there was a sudden silence; and by the cries of those nearest to the preacher, we heard that he had fainted. We had all crowded round him, as if he were our safety and our guide; and he was overcome by the heat and the fatigue, for we were the fifth set of people whom he had addressed that day. I left the crowd who were leading him down, and took a lonely path myself.

Here was the earnestness I needed. To this weak and weary fainting man, religion was a life and a passion. I look back now, and wonder at my blindness as to what was the root of all my Nelly's patience and long-suffering; for I thought, now I had found out what religion was, and that hitherto it had been all an unknown thing to me.

Henceforward, my life was changed. I was zealous and fanatical. Beyond the set to whom I had affiliated myself I had no sympathy. I would have persecuted all who differed from me, if I had only had the power. I became an ascetic in all bodily enjoyments. And, strange and inexplicable mystery, I had some thoughts that by every act of self-denial I was attaining to my unholy end, and that, when I had fasted and prayed long enough, God would place my vengeance in my hands. I have knelt by Nelly's bedside, and vowed to live a self-denying life, as regarded all outward things, if so that God would grant my prayer. I left it in His hands. I felt sure He would trace out the token and the word; and Nelly would listen to my passionate words, and lie awake sorrowful and heart-sore through the night; and I would get up and make her tea, and re-arrange her pillows, with a strange and wilful blindness that my bitter words and blasphemous prayers had cost her miserable sleepless nights. My Nelly was suffering yet from that blow. How or where the stone had hurt her, I never understood; but in consequence of that one moment's action, her limbs became numb and dead, and, by slow degrees, she took to her bed, from whence she was never carried alive. There she lay, propped up by pillows, her meek face ever bright, and smiling forth a greeting; her white pale hands ever busy with some kind of work; and our little Grace was as the power of motion to her.

Fierce as I was away from her, I never could speak to her but in my gentlest tones. She seemed to me as if she had never wrestled for salvation as I had; and when away from her, I resolved many a time and oft, that I would rouse her up to her state of danger when I returned home that evening — even if strong reproach were required I would rouse her up to her soul's need. But I came in and heard her voice singing softly some holy word of patience, some psalm which, may-be, had comforted the martyrs, and when I saw her face like the face of an angel, full of patience and happy faith, I put off my awakening speeches till another time.

One night, long ago, when I was yet young and strong, although my years were past forty, I sat alone in my houseplace. Nelly was always in bed, as I have told you, and Grace lay in a cot by her side. I believed them to be both asleep; though how they could sleep I could not conceive, so wild and terrible was the night. The wind came sweeping down from the hill-top in great beats, like the pulses of Heaven; and, during the pauses, while I listened for the coming roar, I felt the earth shiver beneath me. The rain beat against windows and doors, and sobbed for entrance. I thought the Prince of the Air was abroad; and I heard, or fancied I heard, shrieks come on the blast, like the cries of sinful souls given over to his power.

The sounds came nearer and nearer. I got up and saw to the fastenings of the door, for though I cared not for mortal man, I did care for what I believed was surrounding the house, in evil might and power. But the door shook as though it, too, were in deadly terror, and I thought the fastenings would give way. I stood facing the entrance, lashing my heart up to defy the spiritual enemy that I looked to see, every instant, in bodily presence; and the door did burst open; and before me stood — what was it? man or demon? a grey-haired man, with poor worn clothes all wringing wet, and he himself battered and piteous to look upon, from the storm he had passed through.

“Let me in!” he said. “Give me shelter. I am poor, or I would reward you. And I am friendless too,” he said looking up in my face, like one seeking what he cannot find. In that

look, strangely changed, I knew that God had heard me; for it was the old cowardly look of my life's enemy. Had he been a stranger I might not have welcomed him, but as he was mine enemy I gave him welcome in a lordly dish. I sat opposite to him. "Whence do you come?" said I. "It is a strange night to be out on the fells."

He looked up at me sharp; but in general he held his head down like a beast or hound.

"You won't betray me. I'll not trouble you long. As soon as the storm abates I'll go."

"Friend!" said I, "what have I to betray?" and I trembled lest he should keep himself out of my power and not tell me. "You come for shelter, and I give you of my best. Why do you suspect me?"

"Because," said he in his abject bitterness, "all the world is against me. I never met with goodness or kindness; and now I am hunted like a wild beast. I'll tell you—I'm a convict returned before my time. I was a Sawley man," (as if I, of all men, did not know it!) "and I went back like a fool to the old place. They've hunted me out where I would fain have lived rightly and quietly, and they'll send me back to that hell upon earth if they catch me. I did not know it would be such a night. Only let me rest and get warm once more, and I'll go away. Good kind man! have pity upon me." I smiled all his doubts away; I promised him a bed on the floor, and I thought of Jael and Sisera. My heart leaped up like a war-horse at the sound of the trumpet, and said, "Ha, ha, the Lord hath heard my prayer and supplication; I shall have vengeance at last!"

He did not dream who I was. He was changed; so that I, who had learned his features with all the diligence of hatred, did not at first recognise him; and he thought not of me, only of his own woe and affright. He looked into the fire with the dreamy gaze of one whose strength of character, if he had any, is beaten out of him, and cannot return at any emergency whatsoever. He sighed and pitied himself, yet could not decide on what to do. I went softly about my business, which was to make him up a bed on the floor; and, when he was lulled to

sleep and security, to make the best of my way to Padiham, and summon the constable, into whose hands I would give him up to be taken back to his "hell upon earth." I went into Nelly's room. She was awake and anxious. I saw she had been listening to the voices.

"Who is there?" said she. "John, tell me — it sounded like a voice I knew. For God's sake, speak."

I smiled a quiet smile. "It is a poor man who has lost his way. Go to sleep, my dear — I shall make him up on the floor. I may not come for some time. Go to sleep;" and I kissed her. I thought she was soothed, but not fully satisfied. However, I hastened away before there was any further time for questioning. I made up the bed; and Richard Jackson, tired out, lay down and fell asleep. My contempt for him almost equalled my hate. If I were avoiding return to a place which I thought to be a hell upon earth, think you I would have taken a quiet sleep under any man's roof, till somehow or another I was secure? Now comes this man, and with incontinence of tongue, blabs out the very thing he most should conceal, and then lies down to a good, quiet, snoring sleep. I looked again. His face was old, and worn, and miserable. So should mine enemy look. And yet it was sad to gaze upon him, poor hunted creature!

I would gaze no more, lest I grew weak and pitiful. Thus I took my hat, and softly opened the door. The wind blew in, but did not disturb him, he was so utterly weary. I was out in the open air of night. The storm was ceasing, and instead of the black sky of doom, that I had seen when I last looked forth, the moon was come out, wan and pale, as if wearied with the fight in the heavens; and her white light fell ghostly and calm on many a well-known object. Now and then, a dark torn cloud was blown across her home in the sky, but they grew fewer and fewer, and at last she shone out steady and clear. I could see Padiham down before me. I heard the noise of the water-courses down the hill-side. My mind was full of one thought, and strained upon that one thought, and yet my senses were most acute and observant. When I came to

the brook, it was swollen to a rapid tossing river; and the little bridge, with its hand-rail, was utterly swept away. It was like the bridge at Sawley, where I had first seen Nelly; and I remembered that day even then in the midst of my vexation at having to go round. I turned away from the brook, and there stood a little figure facing me. No spirit from the dead could have affrighted me as it did; for I saw it was Grace, whom I had left in bed by her mother's side.

She came to me, and took my hand. Her bare feet glittered white in the moonshine; and sprinkled the light upwards, as they plashed through the pool.

“Father,” said she, “Mother bade me say this.” Then pausing to gather breath and memory, she repeated these words, like a lesson of which she feared to forget a syllable.

“Mother says, ‘There is a God in Heaven; and in His house are many mansions. If you hope to meet her there, you will come back and speak to her; if you are to be separate for ever and ever, you will go on, and may God have mercy on her, and on you!’ Father, I have said it right—every word.”

I was silent. At last I said —

“What made Mother say this? How came she to send you out?”

“I was asleep, Father, and I heard her cry. I wakened up, and I think you had but just left the house, and that she was calling for you. Then she prayed, with the tears rolling down her cheeks, and kept saying, —‘Oh, that I could walk! —Oh, that for one hour I could run and walk!’ So I said, ‘Mother, I can run and walk. Where must I go?’ And she clutched at my arm; and bade God bless me; and told me not to fear, for that He would compass me about; and taught me my message: and now, Father, dear Father, you will meet mother in Heaven, won’t you — and not be separate for ever and ever?” She clung to my knees, and pleaded once more in her mother’s words. I took her up in my arms, and turned homewards.

“Is yon man there, on the kitchen floor?” asked I.

"Yes!" she answered. At any rate my vengeance was not out of my power yet.

When we got home I passed him, dead asleep.

In our room, to which my child guided me, was Nelly. She sat up in bed, a most unusual attitude for her, and one of which I thought she had been incapable of attaining to without help. She had her hands clasped, and her face rapt, as if in prayer; and when she saw me, she lay back with a sweet ineffable smile. She could not speak at first; but when I came near, she took my hand and kissed it, and then she called Grace to her, and made her take off her cloak and her wet things, and, dressed in her short scanty nightgown, she slipped in to her mother's warm side, and all this time my Nelly never told me why she summoned me; it seemed enough that she should hold my hand, and feel that I was there. I believed she had read my heart; and yet I durst not speak to ask her. At last she looked up. "My husband," said she, "God has saved you and me from a great sorrow this night." I would not understand, and I felt her look die away into disappointment.

"That poor wanderer in the house-place is Richard Jackson, is it not?"

I made no answer. Her face grew white and wan.

"Oh," said she, "this is hard to bear. Speak what is in your mind, I beg of you. I will not thwart you harshly; dearest John, only speak to me."

"Why need I speak? You seem to know all."

"I do know that his is a voice I can never forget; and I do know the awful prayers you have prayed; and I know how I have lain awake, to pray that your words might never be heard; and I am a powerless cripple. I put my cause in God's hands. You shall not do the man any harm. What you have it in your thoughts to do I cannot tell. But I know that you can not do it. My eyes are dim with a strange mist, but some voice tells me that you will forgive even Richard Jackson. Dear husband—dearest John, it is so dark, I cannot see you; but speak once to me."

I moved the candle — but when I saw her face, I saw what *Lizzie Leigh.*

was drawing the mist over those loving eyes — how strange and woeful that she could die! Her little girl lying by her side looked in my face, and then at her; and the wild knowledge of death shot through her young heart, and she screamed aloud.

Nelly opened her eyes once more. They fell upon the gaunt sorrow-worn man who was the cause of all. He roused him from his sleep, at that child's piercing cry, and stood at the doorway looking in. He knew Nelly, and understood where the storm had driven him to shelter. He came towards her: —

“Oh, woman — dying woman — you have haunted me in the loneliness of the Bush far away — you have been in my dreams for ever — the hunting of men has not been so terrible as the hunting of your Spirit, — that stone — that stone!” — he fell down by her bedside in an agony — above which her saint-like face looked on us all, for the last time, glorious with the coming light of heaven. She spoke once again: —

“It was a moment of passion — I never bore you malice for it. I forgive you — and so does John, I trust.”

Could I keep my purpose there? It faded into nothing. But above my choking tears, I strove to speak clear and distinct, for her dying ear to hear, and her sinking heart to be gladdened.

“I forgive you, Richard; I will befriend you in your trouble.”

She could not see; but instead of the dim shadow of death stealing over her face, a quiet light came over it, which we knew was the look of a soul at rest.

That night I listened to his tale for her sake; and I learned that it is better to be sinned against than to sin. In the storm of the night mine enemy came to me; in the calm of the grey morning I let him forth, and bade him “God speed.” And a woe had come upon me, but the burning burden of a sinful, angry heart was taken off. I am old now, and my daughter is married. I try to go about preaching and teaching in my rough, rude way; and what I teach is how Christ lived and died, and what was Nelly’s faith of love.

DISAPPEARANCES.

I AM not in the habit of seeing the "Household Words" regularly; but a friend, who lately sent me some of the back numbers, recommended me to read "all the papers relating to the Detective and Protective Police," which I accordingly did — not as the generality of readers have done, as they appeared week by week, or with pauses between, but consecutively, as a popular history of the Metropolitan Police; and, as I suppose it may also be considered, a history of the Police force in every large town in England. When I had ended these papers, I did not feel disposed to read any others at that time, but preferred falling into a train of reverie and recollection.

First of all I remembered, with a smile, the unexpected manner in which a relation of mine was discovered by an acquaintance, who had mislaid or forgotten Mr. B.'s address. Now my dear cousin, Mr. B., charming as he is in many points, has the little peculiarity of liking to change his lodgings once every three months on an average, which occasions some bewilderment to his country friends, who have no sooner learnt the 19, Belle Vue Road, Hampstead, than they have to take pains to forget that address, and to remember the 27 $\frac{1}{2}$, Upper Brown Street, Camberwell; and so on, till I would rather learn a page of "Walker's Pronouncing Dictionary," than try to remember the variety of directions which I have had to put on my letters to Mr. B. during the last three years. Last summer it pleased him to remove to a beautiful village not ten miles out of London, where there is a railway station. Thither his friend sought him. (I do not now speak of the following scent there had been through three or four different lodgings, where Mr. B. had been residing, before his country friend ascertained

that he was now lodging at R—.) He spent the morning in making inquiries as to Mr. B.'s whereabouts in the village; but many gentlemen were lodging there for the summer, and neither butcher nor baker could inform him where Mr. B. was staying; his letters were unknown at the Post-office, which was accounted for by the circumstance of their always being directed to his office in town. At last the country friend sauntered back to the railway-office, and while he waited for the train he made inquiry, as a last resource, of the book-keeper at the station. "No, sir, I cannot tell you where Mr. B. lodges — so many gentlemen go by the trains; but I have no doubt but that the person standing by that pillar can inform you." The individual to whom he directed the inquirer's attention had the appearance of a tradesman — respectable enough, yet with no pretensions to "gentility," and had, apparently, no more urgent employment than lazily watching the passengers who came dropping in to the station. However, when he was spoken to, he answered civilly and promptly. "Mr. B.? tall gentleman with light hair? Yes, sir, I know Mr. B. He lodges at No. 8, Morton Villas — has done these three weeks or more; but you'll not find him there, sir, now. He went to town by the eleven o'clock train, and does not usually return until the half-past four train."

The country friend had no time to lose in returning to the village, to ascertain the truth of this statement. He thanked his informant, and said he would call on Mr. B. at his office in town; but before he left R— station, he asked the book-keeper who the person was to whom he had referred him for information as to his friend's place of residence. "One of the Detective Police, sir," was the answer. I need hardly say, that Mr. B., not without a little surprise, confirmed the accuracy of the policeman's report in every particular.

When I heard this anecdote of my cousin and his friend, I thought that there could be no more romances written on the same kind of plot as *Caleb Williams*; the principal interest of which, to the superficial reader, consists in the alternation of hope and fear, that the hero may, or may not, escape his

pursuer. It is long since I have read the story, and I forget the name of the offended and injured gentleman, whose privacy Caleb has invaded; but I know that his pursuit of Caleb — his detection of the various hiding-places of the latter — his following up of slight clues — all, in fact, depended upon his own energy, sagacity, and perseverance. The interest was caused by the struggle of man against man; and the uncertainty as to which would ultimately be successful in his object; the unrelenting pursuer, or the ingenious Caleb, who seeks by every device to conceal himself. Now, in 1851, the offended master would set the Detective Police to work; there would be no doubt as to their success; the only question would be as to the time that would elapse before the hiding-place could be detected, and that could not be a question long. It is no longer a struggle between man and man, but between a vast organised machinery, and a weak, solitary individual; we have no hopes, no fears — only certainty. But if the materials of pursuit and evasion, as long as the chase is confined to England, are taken away from the store-house of the romancer, at any rate we can no more be haunted by the idea of the possibility of mysterious disappearances; and any one who has associated much with those who were alive at the end of the last century, can testify that there was some reason for such fears.

When I was a child, I was sometimes permitted to accompany a relation to drink tea with a very clever old lady, of one hundred and twenty — or, so I thought then; I now think she, perhaps, was only about seventy. She was lively, and intelligent, and had seen and known much that was worth narrating. She was a cousin of the Sneyds, the family whence Mr. Edge-worth took two of his wives; had known Major André; had mixed in the Old Whig Society that the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire and “Buff and Blue Mrs. Crewe” gathered round them; her father had been one of the early patrons of the lovely Miss Linley. I name these facts to show that she was too intelligent and cultivated by association, as well as by natural powers, to lend an over-easy credence to the marvellous; and yet I have heard her relate stories of disappearances which

haunted my imagination longer than any tale of wonder. One of her stories was this: — Her father's estate lay in Shropshire, and his park-gates opened right on to a scattered village of which he was landlord. The houses formed a straggling irregular street — here a garden, next a gable-end of a farm, there a row of cottages, and so on. Now, at the end house or cottage lived a very respectable man and his wife. They were well-known in the village, and were esteemed for the patient attention which they paid to the husband's father, a paralytic old man. In winter, his chair was near the fire; in summer, they carried him out into the open space in front of the house to bask in the sunshine, and to receive what placid amusement he could from watching the little passings to and fro of the villagers. He could not move from his bed to his chair without help. One hot and sultry June day, all the village turned out to the hay-fields. Only the very old and the very young remained.

The old father of whom I have spoken was carried out to bask in the sunshine that afternoon as usual, and his son and daughter-in-law went to the hay-making. But when they came home in the early evening, their paralysed father had disappeared — was gone! and from that day forwards, nothing more was ever heard of him. The old lady, who told this story, said with the quietness that always marked the simplicity of her narration, that every inquiry which her father could make was made, and that it could never be accounted for. No one had observed any stranger in the village; no small household robbery, to which the old man might have been supposed an obstacle, had been committed in his son's dwelling that afternoon. The son and daughter-in-law (noted too for their attention to the helpless father) had been a-field among all the neighbours the whole of the time. In short, it never was accounted for; and left a painful impression on many minds.

I will answer for it the Detective Police would have ascertained every fact relating to it in a week.

This story from its mystery was painful, but had no consequences to make it tragical. The next which I shall tell (and although traditional, these anecdotes of disappearances which I

relate in this paper are correctly repeated, and were believed by my informants to be strictly true), had consequences, and melancholy ones too. The scene of it is in a little country-town, surrounded by the estates of several gentlemen of large property. About a hundred years ago there lived in this small town an attorney, with his mother and sisters. He was agent for one of the squires near, and received rents for him on stated days, which of course were well known. He went at these times to a small public-house, perhaps five miles from —, where the tenants met him, paid their rents, and were entertained at dinner afterwards. One night he did not return from this festivity. He never returned. The gentleman whose agent he was, employed the Dogberrys of the time to find him, and the missing cash; the mother, whose support, and comfort he was, sought him with all the perseverance of faithful love. But he never returned; and by-and-by the rumour spread that he must have gone abroad with the money; his mother heard the whispers all around her, and could not disprove it; and so her heart broke, and she died. Years after, I think as many as fifty, the well-to-do butcher and grazier of — died; but, before his death, he confessed that he had way-laid Mr. — on the heath close to the town, almost within call of his own house, intending only to rob him, but meeting with more resistance than he anticipated, had been provoked to stab him; and had buried him that very night deep under the loose sand of the heath. There his skeleton was found; but too late for his poor mother to know that his fame was cleared. His sister, too, was dead, unmarried, for no one liked the possibilities which might arise from being connected with the family. None cared if he was guilty or innocent now.

If our Detective Police had only been in existence!

This last is hardly a story of unaccounted-for disappearance. It is only unaccounted for in one generation. But disappearances never to be accounted for on any supposition, are not uncommon, among the traditions of the last century. I have heard (and I think I have read it in one of the earlier numbers of "Chambers's Journal"), of a marriage which took place in

Lincolnshire about the year 1750. It was not then *de rigueur* that the happy couple should set out on a wedding journey; but instead, they and their friends had a merry jovial dinner at the house of either bride or groom; and in this instance the whole party adjourned to the bridegroom's residence, and dispersed, some to ramble in the garden, some to rest in the house until the dinner hour. The bridegroom, it is to be supposed, was with his bride, when he was suddenly summoned away by a domestic, who said that a stranger wished to speak to him; and henceforward he was never seen more. The same tradition hangs about an old deserted Welsh Hall standing in a wood near Festiniog; there, too, the bride-groom was sent for to give audience to a stranger on his wedding-day, and disappeared from the face of the earth from that time; but there, they tell in addition, that the bride lived long, — that she passed her three-score years and ten, but that daily during all those years, while there was light of sun or moon to lighten the earth, she sat watching, — watching at one particular window which commanded a view of the approach to the house. Her whole faculties, her whole mental powers, became absorbed in that weary watching; long before she died, she was childish, and only conscious of one wish — to sit in that long high window, and watch the road, along which he might come. She was as faithful as Evangeline, if pensive, and inglorious.

That these two similar stories of disappearance on a wedding-day "obtained," as the French say, shows us that anything which adds to our facility of communication, and organisation, of means, adds to our security of life. Only let a bridegroom try to disappear from an untamed *Katherine* of a bride, and he will soon be brought home, like a recreant coward, overtaken by the electric telegraph, and clutched back to his fate by a Detective policeman.

Two more stories of disappearance, and I have done. I will give you the last in date first, because it is the most melancholy; and we will wind up cheerfully (after a fashion).

Some time between 1820 and 1830, there lived in North Shields a respectable old woman, and her son, who was trying

to struggle into sufficient knowledge of medicine, to go out as ship-surgeon in a Baltic vessel, and perhaps in this manner to earn money enough to spend a session in Edinburgh. He was furthered in all his plans by the late benevolent Dr. G—, of that town. I believe the usual premium was not required in his case; the young man did many useful errands and offices which a finer young gentleman would have considered beneath him; and he resided with his mother in one of the alleys (or "charles,") which lead down from the main street of North Shields to the river. Dr. G— had been with a patient all night, and left her very early on a winter's morning to return home to bed; but first he stepped down to his apprentice's home, and bade him get up, and follow him to his own house, where some medicine was to be mixed, and then taken to the lady. Accordingly the poor lad came, prepared the dose, and set off with it sometime between five and six on a winter's morning. He was never seen again. Dr. G— waited, thinking he was at his mother's house; she waited, considering that he had gone to his day's work. And meanwhile, as people remembered afterwards, the small vessel bound to Edinburgh sailed out of port. The mother expected him back her whole life long; but some years afterwards occurred the discoveries of the Hare and Burke horrors; and people seemed to gain a dark glimpse at his fate; but I never heard that it was fully ascertained, or indeed more than surmised. I ought to add, that all who knew him, spoke emphatically as to his steadiness of purpose, and conduct, so as to render it improbable in the highest degree that he had run off to sea, or suddenly changed his plan of life in any way.

My last story is one of a disappearance, which was accounted for after many years. There is a considerable street in Manchester leading from the centre of the town to some of the suburbs. This street is called at one part Garratt, and afterwards, where it emerges into gentility and comparatively country, Brook Street. It derives its former name from an old black-and-white hall of the time of Richard the Third, or thereabouts, to judge from the style of building; they have closed in what is left of the old hall now; but a few years since this old

house was visible from the main road; it stood low on some vacant ground, and appeared to be half in ruins. I believe it was occupied by several poor families who rented tenements in the tumble-down dwelling. But formerly it was Gerard Hall, (what a difference between Gerard and Garratt!) and was surrounded by a park with a clear brook running through it, with pleasant fish-ponds, (the name of these was preserved until very lately, on a street near), orchards, dovecotes, and similar appurtenances to the manor-houses of former days. I am almost sure that the family to whom it belonged were Mosleys, probably a branch of the tree of the lord of the Manor of Manchester. Any topographical work of the last century relating to their district would give the name of the last proprietor of the old stock, and it is to him that my story refers.

Many years ago there lived in Manchester two old maiden ladies, of high respectability. All their lives had been spent in the town, and they were fond of relating the changes which had taken place within their recollection; which extended back to seventy or eighty years from the present time. They knew much of its traditional history from their father, as well; who, with his father before him, had been respectable attorneys in Manchester, during the greater part of the last century: they were, also, agents for several of the county-families; who, driven from their old possessions by the enlargement of the town, found some compensation in the increased value of any land which they might choose to sell. Consequently the Messrs. S—, father and son, were conveyancers in good repute, and acquainted with several secret pieces of family history; one of which related to Garratt Hall.

The owner of this estate, some time in the first half of the last century, married young; he and his wife had several children, and lived together in a quiet state of happiness for many years. At last, business of some kind took the husband up to London; a week's journey in those days. He wrote and announced his arrival; I do not think he ever wrote again. He seemed to be swallowed up in the abyss of the Metropolis, for no friend (and the lady had many and powerful friends) could

ever ascertain for her what had become of him; the prevalent idea was that he had been attacked by some of the street-robbers who prowled about in those days, that he had resisted, and had been murdered. His wife gradually gave up all hopes of seeing him again, and devoted herself to the care of her children; and so they went on, tranquilly enough, until the heir came of age, when certain deeds were necessary before he could legally take possession of the property. These deeds Mr. S— (the family lawyer) stated had been given up by him into the missing gentleman's keeping just before the last mysterious journey to London, with which I think they were in some way concerned. It was possible that they were still in existence; some one in London might have them in possession, and be either conscious or unconscious of their importance. At any rate, Mr. S—'s advice to his client was that he should put an advertisement in the London papers, worded so skilfully that any one who might hold the important documents should understand to what it referred, and no one else. This was accordingly done; and, although repeated, at intervals, for some time, it met with no success. But, at last, a mysterious answer was sent; to the effect that the deeds were in existence, and should be given up; but only on certain conditions, and to the heir himself. The young man, in consequence went up to London; and adjourned, according to directions, to an old house in Barbican; where he was told by a man, apparently awaiting him, that he must submit to be blindfolded, and must follow his guidance. He was taken through several long passages before he left the house; at the termination of one of these he was put into a sedan-chair, and carried about for an hour or more; he always reported that there were many turnings, and that he imagined he was set down finally not very far from his starting point.

When his eyes were unbandaged, he was in a decent sitting-room, with tokens of family occupation lying about. A middle-aged gentleman entered, and told him that, until a certain time had elapsed (which should be indicated to him in a particular way, but of which the length was not then named), he must

swear to secrecy as to the means by which he obtained possession of the deeds. This oath was taken; and then the gentleman, not without some emotion, acknowledged himself to be the missing father of the heir. It seems that he had fallen in love with a damsel, a friend of the person with whom he lodged. To this young woman he had represented himself as unmarried; she listened willingly to his wooing, and her father, who was a shopkeeper in the City, was not averse to the match, as the Lancashire squire had a goodly presence, and many similar qualities, which the shopkeeper thought might be acceptable to his customers. The bargain was struck; the descendant of a knightly race married the only daughter of the City shopkeeper, and became a junior partner in the business. He told his son that he had never repented the step he had taken; that his lowly-born wife was sweet, docile, and affectionate; that his family by her was large; and that he and they were thriving and happy. He inquired after his first (or rather, I should say, his true) wife with friendly affection; approved of what she had done with regard to his estate, and the education of his children; but said that he considered he was dead to her, as she was to him. When he really died he promised that a particular message, the nature of which he specified, should be sent to his son at Garratt; until then they would not hear more of each other; for it was of no use attempting to trace him under his incognito, even if the oath did not render such an attempt forbidden. I dare say the youth had no great desire to trace out the father, who had been one in name only. He returned to Lancashire; took possession of the property at Manchester; and many years elapsed before he received the mysterious intimation of his father's real death. After that, he named the particulars connected with the recovery of the title-deeds to Mr. S—, and one or two intimate friends. When the family became extinct, or removed from Garratt, it became no longer any very closely kept secret, and I was told the tale of the disappearance by Miss S—, the aged daughter of the family agent.

Once more, let me say, I am thankful I live in the days of the Detective Police; if I am murdered, or commit bigamy, — at

any rate my friends will have the comfort of knowing all about it.

A CORRESPONDENT has favoured us with the sequel of the disappearance of the pupil of Dr. G., who vanished from North Shields, in charge of certain potions he was entrusted with, very early one morning, to convey to a patient.

"Dr. G.'s son married my sister, and the young man who disappeared was a pupil in the house. When he went out with the medicine, he was hardly dressed, having merely thrown on some clothes; and he went in slippers — which incidents induced the belief that he was made away with. After some months his family put on mourning; and the G.s (*very* timid people) were so sure that he was murdered, that they wrote verses to his memory, and became sadly worn by terror. But, after a long time (I fancy, but am not sure, about a year and a half), came a letter from the young man, who was doing well in America. His explanation was, that a vessel was lying at the wharf about to sail in the morning, and the youth, who had long meditated evasion, thought it a good opportunity, and stepped on board, after leaving the medicine at the proper door. I spent some weeks at Dr. G.'s after the occurrence; and very doleful we used to be about it. But the next time I went they were, naturally, very angry with the inconsiderate young man."

THE OLD NURSE'S STORY.

You know, my dears, that your mother was an orphan, and an only child; and I dare say you have heard that your grandfather was a clergyman up in Westmoreland, where I come from. I was just a girl in the village school, when, one day, your grandmother came in to ask the mistress if there was any scholar there who would do for a nurse-maid; and mighty proud I was, I can tell ye, when the mistress called me up, and spoke to my being a good girl at my needle, and a steady honest girl, and one whose parents were very respectable, though they might be poor. I thought I should like nothing better than to serve the pretty young lady, who was blushing as deep as I was, as she spoke of the coming baby, and what I should have to do with it. However, I see you don't care so much for this part of my story, as for what you think is to come, so I 'll tell you at once. I was engaged and settled at the parsonage before Miss Rosamond (that was the baby, who is now your mother) was born. To be sure, I had little enough to do with her when she came, for she was never out of her mother's arms, and slept by her all night long; and proud enough was I sometimes when missis trusted her to me. There never was such a baby before or since, though you 've all of you been fine enough in your turns; but for sweet, winning ways, you 've none of you come up to your mother. She took after her mother, who was a real lady born; a Miss Furnivall, a granddaughter of Lord Furnivall's, in Northumberland. I believe she had neither brother nor sister, and had been brought up in my lord's family till she had married your grandfather, who was just a curate, son to a shopkeeper in Carlisle — but a clever, fine gentleman as ever was — and one who was a right-down hard worker in his

parish, which was very wide, and scattered all abroad over the Westmoreland Fells. When your mother, little Miss Rosamond, was about four or five years old, both her parents died in a fortnight — one after the other. Ah! that was a sad time. My pretty young mistress and me was looking for another baby, when my master came home from one of his long rides, wet, and tired, and took the fever he died of; and then she never held up her head again, but just lived to see her dead baby, and have it laid on her breast before she sighed away her life. My mistress had asked me, on her death-bed, never to leave Miss Rosamond; but if she had never spoken a word, I would have gone with the little child to the end of the world.

The next thing, and before we had well stilled our sobs, the executors and guardians came to settle the affairs. They were my poor young mistress's own cousin, Lord Furnivall, and Mr. Esthwaite, my master's brother, a shopkeeper in Manchester; not so well to do then, as he was afterwards, and with a large family rising about him. Well! I don't know if it were their settling, or because of a letter my mistress wrote on her death-bed to her cousin, my lord; but somehow it was settled that Miss Rosamond and me were to go to Furnivall Manor House, in Northumberland, and my lord spoke as if it had been her mother's wish that she should live with his family, and as if he had no objections, for that one or two more or less could make no difference in so grand a household. So, though that was not the way in which I should have wished the coming of my bright and pretty pet to have been looked at — who was like a sunbeam in any family, be it never so grand — I was well pleased that all the folks in the Dale should stare and admire, when they heard I was going to be young lady's maid at my Lord Furnivall's at Furnivall Manor.

But I made a mistake in thinking we were to go and live where my lord did. It turned out that the family had left Furnivall Manor House fifty years or more. I could not hear that my poor young mistress had ever been there, though she had been brought up in the family; and I was sorry for that, for I should

have liked Miss Rosamond's youth to have passed where her mother's had been.

My lord's gentleman, from whom I asked as many questions as I durst, said that the Manor House was at the foot of the Cumberland Fells, and a very grand place; that an old Miss Furnivall, a great-aunt of my lord's, lived there, with only a few servants; but that it was a very healthy place, and my lord had thought that it would suit Miss Rosamond very well for a few years, and that her being there might perhaps amuse his old aunt.

I was bidden by my lord to have Miss Rosamond's things ready by a certain day. He was a stern proud man, as they say all the Lords Furnivall were; and he never spoke a word more than was necessary. Folk did say he had loved my young mistress; but that, because she knew that his father would object, she would never listen to him, and married Mr. Esthwaite; but I don't know. He never married at any rate. But he never took much notice of Miss Rosamond; which I thought he might have done if he had cared for her dead mother. He sent his gentleman with us to the Manor House, telling him to join him at Newcastle that same evening; so there was no great length of time for him to make us known to all the strangers before he, too, shook us off; and we were left, two lonely young things (I was not eighteen), in the great old Manor House. It seems like yesterday that we drove there. We had left our own dear parsonage very early, and we had both cried as if our hearts would break, though we were travelling in my lord's carriage, which I thought so much of once. And now it was long past noon on a September day, and we stopped to change horses for the last time at a little smoky town, all full of colliers and miners. Miss Rosamond had fallen asleep, but Mr. Henry told me to waken her, that she might see the park and the Manor House as we drove up. I thought it rather a pity; but I did what he bade me, for fear he should complain of me to my lord. We had left all signs of a town, or even a village, and were then inside the gates of a large wild park — not like the parks here in the south, but with rocks, and the noise of running water,

and gnarled thorn-trees, and old oaks, all white and peeled with age.

The road went up about two miles, and then we saw a great and stately house, with many trees close around it, so close that in some places their branches dragged against the walls when the wind blew; and some hung broken down; for no one seemed to take much charge of the place; — to lop the wood, or to keep the moss-covered carriage-way in order. Only in front of the house all was clear. The great oval drive was without a weed; and neither tree nor creeper was allowed to grow over the long, many-windowed front; at both sides of which a wing projected, which were each the ends of other side fronts; for the house, although it was so desolate, was even grander than I expected. Behind it rose the Fells, which seemed unenclosed and bare enough; and on the left hand of the house, as you stood facing it, was a little, old-fashioned flower-garden, as I found out afterwards. A door opened out upon it from the west front; it had been scooped out of the thick dark wood for some old Lady Furnivall; but the branches of the great forest trees had grown and overshadowed it again, and there were very few flowers that would live there at that time.

When we drove up to the great front entrance, and went into the hall I thought we should be lost — it was so large, and vast, and grand. There was a chandelier all of bronze, hung down from the middle of the ceiling; and I had never seen one before, and looked at it all in amaze. Then, at one end of the hall, was a great fire-place, as large as the sides of the houses in my country, with massy andirons and dogs to hold the wood; and by it were heavy old-fashioned sofas. At the opposite end of the hall, to the left as you went in — on the western side — was an organ built into the wall, and so large that it filled up the best part of that end. Beyond it, on the same side, was a door; and opposite, on each side of the fire-place, were also doors leading to the east front; but those I never went through as long as I stayed in the house, so I can't tell you what lay beyond.

Lizzie Leigh.

The afternoon was closing in and the hall, which had no fire lighted in it, looked dark and gloomy, but we did not stay there a moment. The old servant, who had opened the door for us bowed to Mr. Henry, and took us in through the door at the further side of the great organ, and led us through several smaller halls and passages into the west drawing-room, where he said that Miss Furnivall was sitting. Poor little Miss Rosamond held very tight to me, as if she were scared and lost in that great place, and as for myself, I was not much better. The west drawing-room was very cheerful-looking, with a warm fire in it, and plenty of good, comfortable furniture about. Miss Furnivall was an old lady not far from eighty, I should think, but I do not know. She was thin and tall, and had a face as full of fine wrinkles as if they had been drawn all over it with a needle's point. Her eyes were very watchful to make up, I suppose, for her being so deaf as to be obliged to use a trumpet. Sitting with her, working at the same great piece of tapestry, was Mrs. Stark, her maid and companion, and almost as old as she was. She had lived with Miss Furnivall ever since they both were young, and now she seemed more like a friend than a servant; she looked so cold and grey, and stony, as if she had never loved or cared for any one; and I don't suppose she did care for any one, except her mistress; and, owing to the great deafness of the latter, Mrs. Stark treated her very much as if she were a child. Mr. Henry gave some message from my lord, and then he bowed good-bye to us all, — taking no notice of my sweet little Miss Rosamond's out-stretched hand — and left us standing there, being looked at by the two old ladies through their spectacles.

I was right glad when they rung for the old footman who had shown us in at first, and told him to take us to our rooms. So we went out of that great drawing-room, and into another sitting-room, and out of that, and then up a great flight of stairs, and along a broad gallery — which was something like a library, having books all down one side, and windows and writing-tables all down the other — till we came to our rooms, which I was not sorry to hear were just over the kitchens; for I

began to think I should be lost in that wilderness of a house. There was an old nursery, that had been used for all the little lords and ladies long ago, with a pleasant fire burning in the grate, and the kettle boiling on the hob, and tea things spread out on the table; and out of that room was the night-nursery, with a little crib for Miss Rosamond close to my bed. And old James called up Dorothy, his wife, to bid us welcome; and both he and she were so hospitable and kind, that by and by Miss Rosamond and me felt quite at home; and by the time tea was over, she was sitting on Dorothy's knee, and chattering away as fast as her little tongue could go. I soon found out that Dorothy was from Westmoreland, and that bound her and me together, as it were; and I would never wish to meet with kinder people than were old James and his wife. James had lived pretty nearly all his life in my lord's family, and thought there was no one so grand as they. He even looked down a little on his wife; because, till he had married her, she had never lived in any but a farmer's household. But he was very fond of her, as well he might be. They had one servant under them, to do all the rough work. Agnes they called her; and she and me, and James and Dorothy, with Miss Furnivall and Mrs. Stark, made up the family; always remembering my sweet little Miss Rosamond! I used to wonder what they had done before she came, they thought so much of her now. Kitchen and drawing-room, it was all the same. The hard, sad Miss Furnivall, and the cold Mrs. Stark, looked pleased when she came fluttering in like a bird, playing and pranking hither and thither, with a continual murmur, and pretty prattle of gladness. I am sure, they were sorry many a time when she flitted away into the kitchen, though they were too proud to ask her to stay with them, and were a little surprised at her taste; though to be sure, as Mrs. Stark said, it was not to be wondered at, remembering what stock her father had come of. The great, old rambling house, was a famous place for little Miss Rosamond. She made expeditions all over it, with me at her heels; all, except the east wing, which was never opened, and whither we never thought of going. But in the western and northern part

was many a pleasant room; full of things that were curiosities to us, though they might not have been to people who had seen more. The windows were darkened by the sweeping boughs of the trees, and the ivy which had overgrown them: but, in the green gloom, we could manage to see old China jars and carved ivory boxes, and great heavy books, and, above all, the old pictures!

Once, I remember, my darling would have Dorothy go with us to tell us who they all were; for they were all portraits of some of my lord's family, though Dorothy could not tell us the names of every one. We had gone through most of the rooms, when we came to the old state drawing-room over the hall, and there was a picture of Miss Furnivall; or, as she was called in those days, Miss Grace, for she was the younger sister. Such a beauty she must have been! but with such a set, proud look, and such scorn looking out of her handsome eyes, with her eyebrows just a little raised, as if she wondered how any one could have the impertinence to look at her; and her lip curled at us, as we stood there gazing. She had a dress on, the like of which I had never seen before, but it was all the fashion when she was young: a hat of some soft white stuff like beaver, pulled a little over her brows, and a beautiful plume of feathers sweeping round it on one side; and her gown of blue satin was open in front to a quilted white stomacher.

"Well, to be sure!" said I, when I had gazed my fill. "Flesh is grass, they do say; but who would have thought that Miss Furnivall had been such an out-and-out beauty, to see her now?"

"Yes," said Dorothy. "Folks change sadly. But if what my master's father used to say was true, Miss Furnivall, the elder sister, was handsomer than Miss Grace. Her picture is here somewhere; but, if I show it you, you must never let on, even to James, that you have seen it. Can the little lady hold her tongue, think you?" asked she.

I was not so sure, for she was such a little sweet, bold, open-spoken child, so I set her to hide herself; and then I helped Dorothy to turn a great picture, that leaned with its face towards

the wall, and was not hung up as the others were. To be sure, it beat Miss Grace for beauty; and, I think, for scornful pride, too, though in that matter it might be hard to choose. I could have looked at it in an hour, but Dorothy seemed half frightened at having shown it to me, and hurried it back again, and bade me run and find Miss Rosamond, for that there were some ugly places about the house, where she should like ill for the child to go. I was a brave, high-spirited girl, and thought little of what the old woman said, for I liked hide-and-seek as well as any child in the parish; so off I ran to find my little one.

As winter drew on, and the days grew shorter, I was sometimes almost certain that I heard a noise as if some one was playing on the great organ in the hall. I did not hear it every evening; but, certainly, I did very often; usually when I was sitting with Miss Rosamond, after I had put her to bed, and keeping quite still and silent in the bed-room. Then I used to hear it booming and swelling away in the distance. The first night, when I went down to my supper, I asked Dorothy who had been playing music, and James said very shortly that I was a gowk to take the wind soughing among the trees for music: but I saw Dorothy look at him very fearfully, and Bessy, the kitchen-maid, said something beneath her breath, and went quite white. I saw they did not like my question, so I held my peace till I was with Dorothy alone, when I knew I could get a good deal out of her. So, the next day, I watched my time, and I coaxed and asked her who it was that played the organ; for I knew that it was the organ and not the wind well enough, for all I had kept silence before James. But Dorothy had had her lesson I'll warrant, and never a word could I get from her. So then I tried Bessy, though I had always held my head rather above her, as I was evened to James and Dorothy, and she was little better than their servant. So she said I must never, never tell; and if I ever told, I was never to say *she* had told me; but it was a very strange noise, and she had heard it many a time, but most of all on winter nights, and before storms; and folks did say, it was the old lord playing on the great organ in the hall, just as he used to do when he was alive; but who the old

lord was, or why he played, and why he played on stormy winter evenings in particular, she either could not or would not tell me. Well! I told you I had a brave heart; and I thought it was rather pleasant to have that grand music rolling about the house, let who would be the player; for now it rose above the great gusts of wind, and wailed and triumphed just like a living creature, and then it fell to a softness most complete; only it was always music, and tunes, so it was nonsense to call it the wind. I thought at first, that it might be Miss Furnivall who played, unknown to Bessy; but, one day when I was in the hall by myself, I opened the organ and peeped all about it and around it, as I had done to the organ in Crosthwaite Church once before, and I saw it was all broken and destroyed inside, though it looked so brave and fine; and then, though it was noon-day, my flesh began to creep a little, and I shut it up, and run away pretty quickly to my own bright nursery; and I did not like hearing the music for some time after that, any more than James and Dorothy did. All this time Miss Rosamond was making herself more, and more beloved. The old ladies liked her to dine with them at their early dinner; James stood behind Miss Furnivall's chair, and I behind Miss Rosamond's all in state; and, after dinner, she would play about in a corner of the great drawing-room, as still as any mouse, while Miss Furnivall slept, and I had my dinner in the kitchen. But she was glad enough to come to me in the nursery afterwards; for, as she said, Miss Furnivall was so sad, and Mrs. Stark so dull; but she and I were merry enough; and, by-and-by, I got not to care for that weird rolling music, which did one no harm, if we did not know where it came from.

That winter was very cold. In the middle of October the frosts began, and lasted many, many weeks. I remember, one day at dinner, Miss Furnivall lifted up her sad, heavy eyes, and said to Mrs. Stark, "I am afraid we shall have a terrible winter," in a strange kind of meaning way. But Mrs. Stark pretended not to hear, and talked very loud of something else. My little lady, and I did not care for the frost; not we! As long as it was dry we climbed up the steep brows, behind the house, and went

up on the Fells, which were bleak, and bare enough, and there we ran races in the fresh, sharp air; and once we came down by a new path that took us past the two old gnarled holly-trees, which grew about half-way down by the east side of the house. But the days grew shorter, and shorter; and the old lord, if it was he, played away more, and more stormily and sadly on the great organ. One Sunday afternoon, — it must have been towards the end of November — I asked Dorothy to take charge of little Missey when she came out of the drawing-room, after Miss Furnivall had had her nap; for it was too cold to take her with me to church, and yet I wanted to go. And Dorothy was glad enough to promise, and was so fond of the child that all seemed well; and Bessy and I set off very briskly, though the sky hung heavy and black over the white earth, as if the night had never fully gone away; and the air, though still, was very biting and keen.

“We shall have a fall of snow,” said Bessy to me. And sure enough, even while we were in church, it came down thick, in great large flakes, so thick it almost darkened the windows. It had stopped snowing before we came out, but it lay soft, thick and deep beneath our feet, as we tramped home. Before we got to the hall the moon rose, and I think it was lighter then, — what with the moon, and what with the white dazzling snow — than it had been when we went to church, between two and three o’clock. I have not told you that Miss Furnivall and Mrs. Stark never went to church: they used to read the prayers together, in their quiet gloomy way; they seemed to feel the Sunday very long without their tapestry-work to be busy at. So when I went to Dorothy in the kitchen, to fetch Miss Rosamond and take her up-stairs with me, I did not much wonder when the old woman told me that the ladies had kept the child with them, and that she had never come to the kitchen, as I had bidden her, when she was tired of behaving pretty in the drawing-room. So I took off my things and went to find her, and bring her to her supper in the nursery. But when I went into the best drawing-room, there sat the two old ladies, very still and quiet, dropping out a word now and then, but looking as if

nothing so bright and merry as Miss Rosamond had ever been near them. Still I thought she might be hiding from me; it was one of her pretty ways; and that she had persuaded them to look as if they knew nothing about her; so I went softly peeping under this sofa, and behind that chair, making believe I was sadly frightened at not finding her.

"What's the matter, Hester?" said Mrs. Stark sharply. I don't know if Miss Furnivall had seen me, for, as I told you, she was very deaf, and she sat quite still, idly staring into the fire, with her hopeless face. "I'm only looking for my little Rosy-Posy," replied I, still thinking that the child was there, and near me, though I could not see her.

"Miss Rosamond is not here," said Mrs. Stark. "She went away more than an hour ago to find Dorothy." And she too turned and went on looking into the fire.

My heart sank at this, and I began to wish I had never left my darling. I went back to Dorothy and told her. James was gone out for the day, but she and me and Bessy took lights and went up into the nursery first, and then we roamed over the great large house, calling and entreating Miss Rosamond to come out of her hiding place, and not frighten us to death in that way. But there was no answer; no sound.

"Oh!" said I at last, "Can she have got into the east wing and hidden there?"

But Dorothy said it was not possible, for that she herself had never been in there; that the doors were always locked, and my lord's steward had the keys, she believed; at any rate, neither she, nor James had ever seen them: so, I said I would go back, and see if, after all, she was not hidden in the drawing-room, unknown to the old ladies; and if I found her there, I said, I would whip her well for the fright she had given me; but I never meant to do it. Well, I went back to the west drawing-room, and I told Mrs. Stark we could not find her anywhere, and asked for leave to look all about the furniture there, for I thought now, that she might have fallen asleep in some warm hidden corner; but no! we looked, Miss Furnivall got up and looked, trembling all over, and she was no where there; then we set off again,

every one in the house, and looked in all the places we had searched before, but we could not find her. Miss Furnivall shivered and shook so much, that Mrs. Stark took her back into the warm drawing-room; but not before they had made me promise to bring her to them when she was found. Well-a-day! I began to think she never would be found, when I bethought me to look out into the great front court, all covered with snow. I was up-stairs when I looked out; but, it was such clear moonlight, I could see quite plain two little footprints, which might be traced from the hall door, and round the corner of the east wing. I don't know how I got down, but I tugged open the great, stiff hall door; and, throwing the skirt of my gown over my head for a cloak, I ran out. I turned the east corner, and there a black shadow fell on the snow; but when I came again into the moonlight, there were the little footmarks going up — up to the Fells. It was bitter cold; so cold that the air almost took the skin off my face as I ran, but I ran on, crying to think how my poor little darling must be perished, and frightened. I was within sight of the holly-trees, when I saw a shepherd coming down the hill, bearing something in his arms wrapped in his maud. He shouted to me, and asked me if I had lost a bairn; and, when I could not speak for crying, he bore towards me, and I saw my wee bairnie lying still, and white, and stiff, in his arms, as if she had been dead. He told me he had been up the Fells to gather in his sheep, before the deep cold of night came on, and that under the holly-trees (black marks on the hill-side, where no other bush was for miles around) he had found my little lady — my lamb — my queen — my darling — stiff, and cold, in the terrible sleep which is frost-begotten. Oh! the joy, and the tears of having her in my arms once again! for I would not let him carry her; but took her, maud and all, into my own arms, and held her near my own warm neck, and heart, and felt the life stealing slowly back again into her little gentle limbs. But she was still insensible when we reached the hall, and I had no breath for speech. We went in by the kitchen door.

“Bring the warming-pan,” said I; and I carried her up-stairs

and began undressing her by the nursery fire, which Bessy had kept up. I called my little lammie all the sweet and playful names I could think of, — even while my eyes were blinded by my tears; and at last, oh! at length she opened her large blue eyes. Then I put her into her warm bed, and sent Dorothy down to tell Miss Furnivall that all was well; and I made up my mind to sit by my darling's bedside the live-long night. She fell away into a soft sleep as soon as her pretty head had touched the pillow, and I watched by her till morning light; when she wakened up bright and clear — or so I thought at first — and, my dears, so I think now.

She said, that she had fancied that she should like to go to Dorothy, for that both the old ladies were asleep, and it was very dull in the drawing-room; and that, as she was going through the west lobby, she saw the snow through the high window falling — falling — soft and steady; but she wanted to see it lying pretty and white on the ground; so she made her way into the great hall; and then, going to the window, she saw it bright and soft upon the drive; but while she stood there, she saw a little girl, not so old as she was, “but so pretty,” said my darling, “and this little girl beckoned to me to come out; and oh, she was so pretty and so sweet, I could not choose but go.” And then this other little girl had taken her by the hand, and side by side the two had gone round the east corner.

“Now you are a naughty little girl, and telling stories,” said I. “What would your good mamma, that is in heaven, and never told a story in her life, say to her little Rosamond, if she heard her — and I dare say she does — telling stories!”

“Indeed, Hester,” sobbed out my child, “I'm telling you true. Indeed I am.”

“Don't tell me!” said I, very stern. “I tracked you by your foot-marks through the snow; there were only yours to be seen: and if you had had a little girl to go hand-in-hand with you up the hill, don't you think the foot-prints would have gone along with yours?”

"I can't help it, dear, dear Hester," said she, crying, "if they did not; I never looked at her feet, but she held my hand fast and tight in her little one, and it was very, very cold. She took me up the Fell-path, up to the holly trees; and there I saw a lady weeping and crying; but when she saw me, she hushed her weeping, and smiled very proud and grand, and took me on her knee, and began to lull me to sleep; and that's all, Hester — but that is true; and my dear mamma knows it is," said she, crying. So I thought the child was in a fever, and pretended to believe her, as she went over her story — over and over again, and always the same. At last Dorothy knocked at the door with Miss Rosamond's breakfast; and she told me the old ladies were down in the eating parlour, and that they wanted to speak to me. They had both been into the night-nursery the evening before, but it was after Miss Rosamond was asleep; so they had only looked at her — not asked me any questions.

"I shall catch it," thought I to myself, as I went along the north gallery. "And yet," I thought, taking courage, "it was in their charge I left her; and it's they that's to blame for letting her steal away unknown and unwatched." So I went in boldly, and told my story. I told it all to Miss Furnivall, shouting it close to her ear; but when I came to the mention of the other little girl out in the snow, coaxing and tempting her out, and wiling her up to the grand and beautiful lady by the holly-tree, she threw her arms up — her old and withered arms — and cried aloud, "Oh! Heaven, forgive! Have mercy!"

Mrs. Stark took hold of her; roughly enough, I thought; but she was past Mrs. Stark's management, and spoke to me, in a kind of wild warning and authority.

"Hester! keep her from that child! It will lure her to her death! That evil child! Tell her it is a wicked, naughty child." Then, Mrs. Stark hurried me out of the room; where, indeed, I was glad enough to go; but Miss Furnivall kept shrieking out, "Oh! have mercy! Wilt Thou never forgive! It is many a long year ago —"

I was very uneasy in my mind after that. I durst never leave Miss Rosamond, night or day, for fear lest she might slip off again, after some fancy or other; and all the more, because I thought I could make out that Miss Furnivall was crazy, from their odd ways about her; and I was afraid lest something of the same kind (which might be in the family, you know) hung over my darling. And the great frost never ceased all this time; and, whenever it was a more stormy night than usual, between the gusts, and through the wind, we heard the old lord playing on the great organ. But, old lord, or not, wherever Miss Rosamond went, there I followed; for my love for her, pretty helpless orphan, was stronger than my fear for the grand and terrible sound. Besides, it rested with me to keep her cheerful and merry, as beseemed her age. So we played together, and wandered together, here and there, and everywhere; for I never dared to lose sight of her again in that large and rambling house. And so it happened, that one afternoon, not long before Christmas day, we were playing together on the billiard-table in the great hall (not that we knew the right way of playing, but she liked to roll the smooth ivory balls with her pretty hands, and I liked to do whatever she did); and, by-and-by, without our noticing it, it grew dusk indoors, though it was still light in the open air, and I was thinking of taking her back into the nursery, when, all of a sudden, she cried out:

“Look, Hester! look! there is my poor little girl out in the snow!”

I turned towards the long narrow windows, and there, sure enough, I saw a little girl, less than my Miss Rosamond — dressed all unfit to be out-of-doors such a bitter night — crying, and beating against the window-panes, as if she wanted to be let in. She seemed to sob and wail, till Miss Rosamond could bear it no longer, and was flying to the door to open it, when, all of a sudden, and close upon us, the great organ pealed out so loud and thundering, it fairly made me tremble; and all the more, when I remembered me that, even in the stillness of that dead-cold weather, I had heard no sound of little battering hands upon the window-glass, although the Phantom Child

had seemed to put forth all its force; and, although I had seen it wail and cry, no faintest touch of sound had fallen upon my ears. Whether I remembered all this at the very moment, I do not know; the great organ sound had so stunned me into terror; but this I know, I caught up Miss Rosamond before she got the hall-door opened, and clutched her, and carried her away, kicking and screaming, into the large bright kitchen, where Dorothy and Agnes were busy with their mince-pies.

"What is the matter with my sweet one?" cried Dorothy, as I bore in Miss Rosamond, who was sobbing as if her heart would break.

"She won't let me open the door for my little girl to come in; and she'll die if she is out on the Fells all night. Cruel, naughty Hester," she said, slapping me; but she might have struck harder, for I had seen a look of ghastly terror on Dorothy's face, which made my very blood run cold.

"Shut the back kitchen door fast, and bolt it well," said she to Agnes. She said no more; she gave me raisins and almonds to quiet Miss Rosamond: but she sobbed about the little girl in the snow, and would not touch any of the good things. I was thankful when she cried herself to sleep in bed. Then I stole down to the kitchen, and told Dorothy I had made up my mind. I would carry my darling back to my father's house in Applethwaite; where, if we lived humbly, we lived at peace. I said I had been frightened enough with the old lord's organ-playing; but now, that I had seen for myself this little moaning child, all decked out as no child in the neighbourhood could be, beating and battering to get in, yet always without any sound or noise — with the dark wound on its right shoulder; and that Miss Rosamond had known it again for the phantom that had nearly lured her to her death (which Dorothy knew was true); I would stand it no longer.

I saw Dorothy change colour once or twice. When I had done, she told me she did not think I could take Miss Rosamond with me, for that she was my lord's ward, and I had no right over her; and she asked me, would I leave the child that I was so fond of, just for sounds and sights that could do me no

harm; and that they had all had to get used to in their turns? I was all in a hot, trembling passion; and I said it was very well for her to talk, that knew what these sights and noises betokened, and that had, perhaps, had something to do with the Spectre-Child while it was alive. And I taunted her so, that she told me all she knew, at last; and then I wished I had never been told, for it only made me more afraid than ever.

She said she had heard the tale from old neighbours, that were alive when she was first married; when folks used to come to the hall sometimes, before it had got such a bad name on the country side: it might not be true, or it might, what she had been told.

The old lord was Miss Furnivall's father — Miss Grace, as Dorothy called her, for Miss Maude was the elder, and Miss Furnivall by rights. The old lord was eaten up with pride. Such a proud man was never seen or heard of; and his daughters were like him. No one was good enough to wed them, although they had choice enough; for they were the great beauties of their day, as I had seen by their portraits, where they hung in the state drawing-room. But, as the old saying is, "Pride will have a fall;" and these two haughty beauties fell in love with the same man, and he no better than a foreign musician, whom their father had down from London to play music with him at the Manor House. For, above all things, next to his pride, the old lord loved music. He could play on nearly every instrument that ever was heard of: and it was a strange thing it did not soften him; but he was a fierce dour old man, and had broken his poor wife's heart with his cruelty, they said. He was mad after music, and would pay any money for it. So he got this foreigner to come; who made such beautiful music, that they said the very birds on the trees stopped their singing to listen. And, by degrees, this foreign gentleman got such a hold over the old lord, that nothing would serve him but that he must come every year; and it was he that had the great organ brought from Holland, and built up in the hall, where it stood now. He taught the old lord to play on it; but many and many a time, when Lord Furnivall was thinking of nothing but

his fine organ, and his finer music, the dark foreigner was walking abroad in the woods with one of the young ladies; now Miss Maude, and then Miss Grace.

Miss Maude won the day and carried off the prize, such as it was; and he and she were married, all unknown to any one; and before he made his next yearly visit, she had been confined of a little girl at a farm-house on the Moors, while her father and Miss Grace thought she was away at Doncaster Races. But though she was a wife and a mother, she was not a bit softened, but as haughty and as passionate as ever; and perhaps more so, for she was jealous of Miss Grace, to whom her foreign husband paid a deal of court — by way of blinding her — as he told his wife. But Miss Grace triumphed over Miss Maude, and Miss Maude grew fiercer and fiercer, both with her husband and with her sister; and the former — who could easily shake off what was disagreeable, and hide himself in foreign countries — went away a month before his usual time that summer, and half-threatened that he would never come back again. Meanwhile, the little girl was left at the farm-house, and her mother used to have her horse saddled and gallop wildly over the hills to see her once every week, at the very least — for where she loved, she loved; and where she hated, she hated. And the old lord went on playing — playing on his organ; and the servants thought the sweet music he made had soothed down his awful temper, of which (Dorothy said) some terrible tales could be told. He grew infirm too, and had to walk with a crutch; and his son — that was the present Lord Furnivall's father — was with the army in America, and the other son at sea; so Miss Maude had it pretty much her own way, and she and Miss Grace grew colder and bitterer to each other every day; till at last they hardly ever spoke, except when the old lord was by. The foreign musician came again the next summer, but it was for the last time; for they led him such a life with their jealousy and their passions, that he grew weary, and went away, and never was heard of again. And Miss Maude, who had always meant to have her marriage acknowledged when her father should be dead, was left now a deserted wife — whom nobody

knew to have been married — with a child that she dared not own, although she loved it to distraction; living with a father whom she feared, and a sister whom she hated. When the next summer passed over and the dark foreigner never came, both Miss Maude and Miss Grace grew gloomy and sad; they had a haggard look about them, though they looked handsome as ever. But by-and-by Miss Maude brightened; for her father grew more and more infirm, and more than ever carried away by his music; and she and Miss Grace lived almost entirely apart, having separate rooms, the one on the west side, Miss Maude on the east — those very rooms which were now shut up. So she thought she might have her little girl with her, and no one need ever know except those who dared not speak about it, and were bound to believe that it was, as she said, a cottager's child she had taken a fancy to. All this, Dorothy said, was pretty well known; but what came afterwards no one knew, except Miss Grace, and Mrs. Stark, who was even then her maid, and much more of a friend to her than ever her sister had been. But the servants supposed, from words that were dropped, that Miss Maude had triumphed over Miss Grace, and told her that all the time the dark foreigner had been mocking her with pretended love — he was her own husband; the colour left Miss Grace's cheek and lips that very day for ever, and she was heard to say many a time that sooner or later she would have her revenge; and Mrs. Stark was for ever spying about the east rooms.

One fearful night, just after the New Year had come in, when the snow was lying thick and deep, and the flakes were still falling — fast enough to blind any one who might be out and abroad — there was a great and violent noise heard, and the old lord's voice above all, cursing and swearing awfully, — and the cries of a little child, — and the proud defiance of a fierce woman, — and the sound of a blow, — and a dead stillness, — and moans and wailings dying away on the hill-side! Then the old lord summoned all his servants, and told them, with terrible oaths, and words more terrible, that his daughter had disgraced herself, and that he had turned her out of doors,

— her, and her child, — and that if ever they gave her help, — or food — or shelter, — he prayed that they might never enter Heaven. And, all the while, Miss Grace stood by him, white and still as any stone; and when he had ended she heaved a great sigh, as much as to say her work was done, and her end was accomplished. But the old lord never touched his organ again, and died within the year; and no wonder! for, on the morrow of that wild and fearful night, the shepherds, coming down the Fell side, found Miss Maude sitting, all crazy and smiling, under the holly-trees, nursing a dead child, — with a terrible mark on its right shoulder. “But that was not what killed it,” said Dorothy; “it was the frost and the cold; — every wild creature was in its hole, and every beast in its fold, — while the child and its mother were turned out to wander on the Fells! And now you know all! and I wonder if you are less frightened now?”

I was more frightened than ever; but I said I was not. I wished Miss Rosamond and myself well out of that dreadful house for ever; but I would not leave her, and I dared not take her away. But oh! how I watched her, and guarded her! We bolted the doors, and shut the window-shutters fast, an hour or more before dark, rather than leave them open five minutes too late. But my little lady still heard the weird child crying and mourning; and not all we could do or say, could keep her from wanting to go to her, and let her in from the cruel wind and the snow. All this time, I kept away from Miss Furnivall and Mrs. Stark, as much as ever I could; for I feared them — I knew no good could be about them, with their grey hard faces, and their dreamy eyes, looking back into the ghastly years that were gone. But, even in my fear, I had a kind of pity — for Miss Furnivall, at least. Those gone down to the pit can hardly have a more hopeless look than that which was ever on her face. At last I even got so sorry for her — who never said a word but what was quite forced from her — that I prayed for her; and I taught Miss Rosamond to pray for one who had done a deadly sin; but often when she came to those words, she would listen, and start up

from her knees, and say, "I hear my little girl plaining and crying very sad — Oh! let her in, or she will die!"

One night—just after New Year's Day had come at last, and the long winter had taken a turn, as I hoped — I heard the west drawing-room bell ring three times, which was the signal for me. I would not leave Miss Rosamond alone, for all she was asleep—for the old lord had been playing wilder than ever—and I feared lest my darling should waken to hear the spectre child; see her I knew she could not. I had fastened the windows too well for that. So, I took her out of her bed and wrapped her up in such outer clothes as were most handy, and carried her down to the drawing-room, where the old ladies sat at their tapestry work as usual. They looked up when I came in, and Mrs. Stark asked, quite astounded, "Why did I bring Miss Rosamond there, out of her warm bed?" I had begun to whisper, "Because I was afraid of her being tempted out while I was away, by the wild child in the snow," when she stopped me short (with a glance at Miss Furnivall), and said Miss Furnivall wanted me to undo some work she had done wrong, and which neither of them could see to unpick. So, I laid my pretty dear on the sofa, and sat down on a stool by them, and hardened my heart against them, as I heard the wind rising and howling.

Miss Rosamond slept on sound, for all the wind blew so; and Miss Furnivall said never a word, nor looked round when the gusts shook the windows. All at once she started up to her full height, and put up one hand, as if to bid us listen.

"I hear voices!" said she. "I hear terrible screams — I hear my father's voice!"

Just at that moment, my darling wakened with a sudden start: "My little girl is crying, oh, how she is crying!" and she tried to get up and go to her, but she got her feet entangled in the blanket, and I caught her up; for my flesh had begun to creep at these noises, which they heard while we could catch no sound. In a minute or two the noises came, and gathered fast, and filled our ears; we, too, heard voices and screams, and no longer heard the winter's wind that raged abroad. Mrs. Stark looked at me, and I at her, but we dared not speak. Suddenly

Miss Furnivall went towards the door, out into the ante-room, through the west lobby, and opened the door into the great hall. Mrs. Stark followed, and I durst not be left, though my heart almost stopped beating for fear. I wrapped my darling tight in my arms, and went out with them. In the hall the screams were louder than ever; they sounded to come from the east wing — nearer and nearer — close on the other side of the locked-up doors — close behind them. Then I noticed that the great bronze chandelier seemed all alright, though the hall was dim, and that a fire was blazing in the vast hearth-place, though it gave no heat; and I shuddered up with terror, and folded my darling closer to me. But as I did so, the east door shook, and she, suddenly struggling to get free from me, cried, "Hester! I must go! My little girl is there; I hear her; she is coming! Hester! I must go!"

I held her tight with all my strength; with a set will, I held her. If I had died, my hands would have grasped her still, I was so resolved in my mind. Miss Furnivall stood listening, and paid no regard to my darling, who had got down to the ground, and whom I, upon my knees now, was holding with both my arms clasped round her neck; she still striving and crying to get free.

All at once, the east door gave way with a thundering crash, as if torn open in a violent passion, and there came into that broad and mysterious light, the figure of a tall old man, with grey hair and gleaming eyes. He drove before him, with many a relentless gesture of abhorrence, a stern and beautiful woman, with a little child clinging to her dress.

"Oh Hester! Hester!" cried Miss Rosamond. "It's the lady! the lady below the holly-trees; and my little girl is with her. Hester! Hester! let me go to her; they are drawing me to them. I feel them — I feel them. I must go!"

Again she was almost convulsed by her efforts to get away; but I held her tighter and tighter, till I feared I should do her a hurt; but rather than let her go towards those terrible phantoms. They passed along towards the great hall-door, where the winds howled and ravened for their prey; but before

they reached that, the lady turned; and I could see that she defied the old man with a fierce and proud defiance; but then she quailed — and then she threw up her arms wildly and piteously to save her child — her little child — from a blow from his uplifted crutch.

And Miss Rosamond was torn as by a power stronger than mine, and writhed in my arms, and sobbed (for by this time the poor darling was growing faint).

“They want me to go with them on to the Fells — they are drawing me to them. Oh, my little girl! I would come, but cruel, wicked Hester holds me very tight.” But when she saw the uplifted crutch she swooned away, and I thanked God for it. Just at this moment — when the tall old man, his hair streaming as in the blast of a furnace, was going to strike the little shrinking child — Miss Furnivall, the old woman by my side, cried out, “Oh, father! father! spare the little innocent child!” But just then I saw — we all saw — another phantom shape itself, and grow clear out of the blue and misty light that filled the hall; we had not seen her till now, for it was another lady who stood by the old man, with a look of relentless hate and triumphant scorn. That figure was very beautiful to look upon, with a soft white hat drawn down over the proud brows, and a red and curling lip. It was dressed in an open robe of blue satin. I had seen that figure before. It was the likeness of Miss Furnivall in her youth; and the terrible phantoms moved on, regardless of old Miss Furnivall’s wild entreaty, — and the uplifted crutch fell on the right shoulder of the little child, and the younger sister looked on, stony and deadly serene. But at that moment, the dim lights, and the fire that gave no heat, went out of themselves, and Miss Furnivall lay at our feet stricken down by the palsy — death-stricken.

Yes! she was carried to her bed that night never to rise again. She lay with her face to the wall, muttering low but muttering alway: “Alas! alas! what is done in youth can never be undone in age! What is done in youth can never be undone in age!”

TRAITS AND STORIES OF THE HUGUENOTS.

I HAVE always been interested in the conversation of any one who could tell me anything about the Huguenots; and, little by little, I have picked up many fragments of information respecting them. I will just recur to the well-known fact, that five years after Henry the Fourth's formal abjuration of the Protestant faith, in fifteen hundred and ninety-three, he secured to the French Protestants their religious liberty by the Edict of Nantes. His unworthy son, however, Louis the Thirteenth, refused them the privileges which had been granted to them by this act; and, when reminded of the claims they had, if the promises of Henry the Third and Henry the Fourth were to be regarded, he answered that "the first-named monarch feared them, and the latter loved them; but he neither feared nor loved them." The extermination of the Huguenots was a favourite project with Cardinal Richelieu, and it was at his instigation that the second siege of Rochelle was undertaken — known even to the most careless student of history for the horrors of famine which the besieged endured. Miserably disappointed as they were at the failure of the looked-for assistance from England, the mayor of the town, Guiton, rejected the conditions of peace which Cardinal Richelieu offered; namely, that they would raze their fortifications to the ground, and suffer the Catholics to enter. But there was a traitorous faction in the town; and, on Guiton's rejection of the terms, this faction collected in one night a crowd of women and children and aged persons, and drove them beyond the lines; they were useless, and yet they ate food. Driven out from the beloved city, tottering, faint, and weary, they were fired at by the

enemy; and the survivors came pleading back to the walls of Rochelle, pleading for a quiet shelter to die in, even if their death were caused by hunger. When two-thirds of the inhabitants had perished; when the survivors were insufficient to bury their dead; when ghastly corpses out-numbered the living — miserable, glorious Rochelle, stronghold of the Huguenots, opened its gates to receive the Roman Catholic Cardinal, who celebrated mass in the church of St. Marguerite, once the beloved sanctuary of Protestant worship. As we cling to the memory of the dead, so did the Huguenots remember Rochelle. Years — long years of suffering — gone by, a village sprang up, not twenty miles from New York, and the name of that village was New Rochelle; and the old men told with tears of the sufferings their parents had undergone when they were little children, far away across the sea, in the "pleasant" land of France.

Richelieu was otherwise occupied after this second siege of Rochelle, and had to put his schemes for the extermination of the Huguenots on one side. So they lived in a kind of trembling uncertain peace during the remainder of the reign of Louis the Thirteenth. But they strove to avert persecution by untiring submission. It was not until sixteen hundred and eighty-three that the Huguenots of the south of France resolved to profess their religion, and refuse any longer to be registered among those of the Roman Catholic faith; to be martyrs rather than apostates or hypocrites. On an appointed Sabbath, the old deserted Huguenot churches were re-opened; nay, those in ruins, of which but a few stones remained to tell the tale of having once been holy ground, were peopled with attentive hearers, listening to the word of God as preached by reformed ministers. Languedoc, Cevennes, Dauphigny, seemed alive with Huguenots — even as the Highlands were, at the chieftain's call, alive with armed men, whose tartans had been hidden but a moment before in the harmonious and blending colours of the heather.

Dragonnades took place, and cruelties were perpetrated, which it is as well, for the honour of human nature, should be

forgotten. Twenty-four thousand conversions were announced to Le Grand Louis, who fully believed in them. The more far-seeing Madame de Maintenon hinted at her doubts in the famous speech, "Even if the fathers are hypocrites, the children will be Catholics."

And then came the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. A multitude of weak reasons were alleged, as is generally the case where there is not one that is really good, or presentable; such as that the Edict was never meant to be perpetual; that (by the blessing of Heaven and the dragonnades) the Huguenots had returned to the true faith, therefore the Edict was useless—a mere matter of form, &c. &c.

As a "mere matter of form," some penalties were decreed against the professors of the extinct heresy. Every Huguenot place of worship was to be destroyed; every minister who refused to conform was to be sent to the Hôpitaux des Forçats at Marseilles and at Valence. If he had been noted for his zeal he was to be considered "obstinate," and sent to slavery for life in such of the West-Indian islands as belonged to the French. The children of Huguenot parents were to be taken from them by force, and educated by the Roman Catholic monks or nuns. These are but a few of the enactments contained in the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

And now come in some of the traditions which I have heard and collected.

A friend of mine, a descendant from some of the Huguenots who succeeded in emigrating to England, has told me the following particulars of her great-great-grandmother's escape. This lady's father was a Norman farmer, or rather small landed proprietor. His name was Lefebvre; he had two sons, grown men, stout and true; able to protect themselves, and choose their own line of conduct. But he had also one little daughter, Magdalen, the child of his old age, and the darling of his house; keeping it alive and glad with her innocent prattle. His small estate was far away from any large town, with its corn-fields and orchards surrounding the old ancestral house. There was plenty always in it; and though the wife was an invalid,

there was always a sober cheerfulness present, to give a charm to the abundance.

The family Lefebvre lived almost entirely on the produce of the estate, and had little need for much communication with their nearest neighbours, with whom, however, as kindly well-meaning people, they were on good terms, although they differed in their religion. In those days coffee was scarcely known, even in large cities; honey supplied the place of sugar; and for the pottage the *bouilli*, the vegetables, the salad, the fruit, the garden, farm, and orchard of the Lefebvres was all-sufficient. The woollen cloth was spun by the men of the house on winter's evenings, standing by the great wheel, and carefully and slowly turning it to secure evenness of thread. The women took charge of the linen, gathering and drying and beating the bad-smelling hemp, the ugliest crop that grew about the farm; and reserving the delicate blue-flowered flax for the fine thread needed for the daughter's *trousseau*; for as soon as a woman child was born, the mother, lying too faint to work, smiled as she planned the web of dainty linen, which was to be woven at Rouen, out of the flaxen thread of gossamer fineness, to be spun by no hand, as you may guess, but that mother's own. And the farm-maidens took pride in the store of sheets and table napery which they were to have a share in preparing for the future wedding of the little baby, sleeping serene in her warm cot, by her mother's side. Such being the self-sufficient habits of the Norman farmers, it was no wonder that in the eventful year of sixteen hundred and eighty-five, Lefebvre remained ignorant for many days of that Revocation which was stirring the whole souls of his co-religionists. But there was to be a cattle fair at Avranches, and he needed a barren cow to fatten up and salt for the winter's provision. Accordingly, the large-boned Norman horse was accoutred, summer as it was, with all its paraphernalia of high-peaked wooden saddle, blue sheep-skin, scarlet worsted fringe and tassels; and the farmer Lefebvre, slightly stiff in his limbs after sixty winters, got on from the horse-block by the stable wall, his little daughter Magdalen nodding and kissing her hand as

he rode away. When he arrived at the fair, in the great place before the cathedral in Avranches, he was struck with the absence of many of those who were united to him by the bond of their common persecuted religion; and on the faces of the Huguenot farmers who were there, was an expression of gloom and sadness. In answer to his inquiries, he learnt for the first time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. He and his sons could sacrifice anything — would be proud of martyrdom, if need were — but the clause which cut him to the heart, was that which threatened that his pretty, innocent, sweet Magdalen might be taken from him and consigned to the teachings of a convent. A convent, to the Huguenots' excited prejudices, implied a place of dissolute morals, as well as of idolatrous doctrine.

Poor Farmer Lefebvre thought no more of the cow he went to purchase; the life and death — nay, the salvation or damnation — of his darling, seemed to him to depend on the speed with which he could reach his home, and take measures for her safety. What these were to be he could not tell in this moment of bewildered terror; for, even while he watched the stable-boy at the inn arranging his horse's gear, without daring to help him, for fear his early departure and undue haste might excite suspicion in the malignant faces he saw gathering about him — even while he trembled with impatience, his daughter might be carried away out of his sight for ever and ever. He mounted and spurred the old horse; but the road was hilly, and the steed had not had his accustomed rest; and was poorly fed, according to the habit of the country; and, at last, he almost stood still at the foot of every piece of rising ground. Farmer Lefebvre dismounted, and ran by the horse's side up every hill, pulling him along, and encouraging his flagging speed by every conceivable noise, meant to be cheerful, though the tears were fast running down the old man's cheeks. He was almost sick with the revulsion of his fears, when he saw Magdalen sitting out in the sun, playing with the "fromages" of the mallow-plant, which are such a delight to Norman children. He got off his horse, which found its accustomed way into the stable.

He kissed Magdalen over and over again, the tears coming down his cheeks like rain. And then he went in to tell his wife — his poor invalid wife. She received the news more tranquilly than he had done. Long illness had deadened the joys and fears of this world to her. She could even think and suggest. "That night a fishing-smack was to sail from Granville to the Channel Islands. Some of the people, who had called at the Lefebvre farm on their way to Avranches, had told her of ventures they were making, in sending over apples and pears to be sold in Jersey, where the orchard crops had failed. The captain was a friend of one of her absent sons: for his sake —"

"But we must part from *her* — from Magdalen, the apple of our eyes. And she — she has never left her home before, never been away from us — who will take care of her? Marie, I say, who is to take care of the precious child?" And the old man was choked with his sobs. Then his wife made answer, and said, —

"God will take care of our precious child, and keep her safe from harm, till we two — or you at least, dear husband, can leave this accursed land. Or, if we cannot follow her, she will be safe for heaven; whereas, if she stays here to be taken to the terrible convent, hell will be her portion, and we shall never see her again — never!"

So they were stilled by their faith into sufficient composure to plan for the little girl. The old horse was again to be harnessed and put into the cart; and if any spying Romanist looked into the cart, what would they see but straw, and a new mattress rolled up, and peeping out of a sackcloth covering. The mother blessed her child, with a full conviction that she should never see her again. The father went with her to Granville. On the way the only relief he had was caring for her comfort in her strange imprisonment. He stroked her cheeks and smoothed her hair with his labour-hardened fingers, and coaxed her to eat the food her mother had prepared. In the evening her feet were cold; he took off his warm flannel jacket to wrap them in. Whether it was that chill coming on the heat of the excited day, or whether the fatigue and grief broke down

the old man utterly, no one can say. The child Magdalen was safely extricated from her hiding-place at the Quai at Granville, and smuggled on board of the fishing-smack, with her great chest of clothes, and half-collected *trousseau*; the captain took her safe to Jersey, and willing friends received her eventually in London. But the father — moaning to himself, “if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved,” saying that pitiful sentence over and over again, as if the repetition could charm away the deep sense of woe — went home, and took to his bed, and died; nor did the mother remain long after him.

One of these Lefebvre sons was the grandfather of the Duke of Dantzic, one of Napoleon’s marshals. The little daughter’s descendants, though not very numerous, are scattered over England; and one of them, as I have said, is the lady who told me this, and many other particulars relating to the exiled Huguenots.

At first the rigorous decrees of the Revocation were principally enforced against the ministers of religion. They were all required to leave Paris at forty-eight hours’ notice, under severe penalties for disobedience. Some of the most distinguished among them were ignominiously forced to leave the country; but the expulsion of these ministers was followed by the emigration of the more faithful among their people. In Languedoc this was especially the case; whole congregations followed their pastors; and France was being rapidly drained of the more thoughtful and intelligent of the Huguenots (who, as a people, had distinguished themselves in manufacture and commerce,) when the king’s minister took the alarm, and prohibited emigration, under pain of imprisonment for life; imprisonment for life, including abandonment to the tender mercies of the priests. Here again I may relate an anecdote told me by my friend: — A husband and wife attempted to escape separately from some town in Brittany; the wife succeeded, and reached England, where she anxiously awaited her husband. The husband was arrested in the attempt, and imprisoned. The priest alone was allowed to visit him; and, after vainly using argument to endeavour to persuade him to renounce his obnoxious religion,

the priest, with cruel zeal, had recourse to physical torture. There was a room in the prison with an iron floor, and no seat, nor means of support or rest; into this room the poor Huguenot was introduced. The iron flooring was gradually heated (one remembers the gouty gentleman whose cure was effected by a similar process in "Sandford and Merton:" but there the heat was not carried up to torture, as it was in the Huguenot's case); still the brave man was faithful. The process was repeated; all in vain. The flesh on the soles of his feet was burnt off, and he was a cripple for life; but cripple or sound, dead or alive, a Huguenot he remained. And by-and-by, they grew weary of their useless cruelty, and the poor man was allowed to hobble about on crutches. How it was that he obtained his liberty at last, my informant could not tell. He only knew, that after years of imprisonment and torture, a poor grey cripple was seen wandering about the streets of London, making vain inquiries for his wife in his broken English, as little understood by most as the Moorish maiden's cry for "Gilbert, Gilbert." Some one at last directed him to a coffee-house near Soho Square, kept by an emigrant, who thrived upon the art, even then national, of making good coffee. It was the resort of the Huguenots, many of whom by this time had turned their intelligence to good account in busy commercial England.

To this coffee-house the poor cripple hied himself; but no one knew of his wife; she might be alive, or she might be dead; it seemed as if her name had vanished from the earth. In the corner sat a pedlar listening to everything, but saying nothing. He had come to London to lay in a stock of wares for his rounds. Now the three harbours of the French emigrants were Norwich, where they established the manufacture of Norwich crape; Spitalfields in London, where they embarked in the silk-trade; and Canterbury, where a colony of them carried on one or two delicate employments, such as jewellery, wax-bleaching, &c. The pedlar took Canterbury in his way, and sought among the French residents for a woman who might correspond to the missing wife. She was there, earning her livelihood as a milliner, and believing her husband to be either a galley-slave, or

dead long since in some of the terrible prisons. But, on hearing the pedlar's tale, she set off at once to London, and found her poor crippled husband, who lived many years afterwards in Canterbury, supported by his wife's exertions.

Another Huguenot couple determined to emigrate. They could disguise themselves; but their baby? If they were seen passing through the gates of the town in which they lived, with a child, they would instantly be arrested, suspected Huguenots as they were. Their expedient was to wrap the baby into a formless bundle; to one end of which was attached a string; and then, taking advantage of the deep gutter which runs in the centre of so many old streets in French towns, they placed the baby in this hollow, close to one of the gates, after dusk. The gend'arme came out to open the gate to them. They were suddenly summoned to see a sick relation, they said; they were known to have an infant child, which no Huguenot mother would willingly leave behind to be brought up by Papists. So the sentinel concluded that they were not going to emigrate, at least this time; and locking the great town-gates behind them, he re-entered his little guard-room. "Now, quick! quick! the string under the gate! Catch it with your hook stick. There in the shadow. There! Thank God! the baby is safe; it has not cried! Pray God the sleeping draught be not too strong!" It was not too strong: father, mother, and babe escaped to England, and their descendants may be reading this very paper.

England, Holland, and the Protestant states of Germany were the places of refuge for the Norman and Breton Protestants. From the south of France escape was more difficult. Algerine pirates infested the Mediterranean, and the small vessels in which many of the Huguenots embarked from the southern ports were an easy prey. There were Huguenot slaves in Algiers and Tripoli for years after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Most Catholic Spain caught some of the fugitives, who were welcomed by the Spanish Inquisition with a different kind of greeting from that which the wise, far-seeing William the Third of England bestowed on such of them as sought English shelter after his accession. We will return to

the condition of the English Huguenots presently. First, let us follow the fortunes of those French Protestants who sent a letter to the State of Massachusetts (among whose historical papers it is still extant), giving an account of the persecutions to which they were exposed, and the distress they were undergoing, stating the wish of many of them to emigrate to America, and asking how far they might have privileges allowed them for following out their pursuit of agriculture. What answer was returned may be guessed from the fact that a tract of land comprising about eleven thousand acres at Oxford, near the present town of Worcester, Massachusetts, was granted to thirty Huguenots, who were invited to come over and settle there. The invitation came like a sudden summons to a land of hope across the Atlantic. There was no time for preparations; these might excite suspicion; they left the "pot boiling on the fire" (to use the expression of one of their descendants), and carried no clothes with them but what they wore. The New Englanders had too lately escaped from religious persecution themselves, not to welcome, and shelter and clothe these poor refugees when they once arrived at Boston. The little French colony at Oxford was called a plantation; and Gabriel Bernon, a descendant of a knightly name in Froissart, a Protestant merchant of Rochelle, was appointed undertaker for this settlement. They sent for a French Protestant minister, and assigned to him a salary of forty pounds a year. They bent themselves assiduously to the task of cultivating the half-cleared land, on the borders of which lay the dark forest, among which the Indians prowled and lurked, ready to spring upon the unguarded households. To protect themselves from this creeping deadly enemy, the French built a fort, traces of which yet remain. But on the murder of the Johnson family, the French dared no longer remain on the bloody spot, although more than ten acres of ground were in garden cultivation around the fort; and long afterwards those who told in hushed, awe-struck voices of the Johnson murder, could point to the rose-bushes, the apple and pear trees yet standing in the Frenchmen's deserted gardens. Mrs. Johnson was a sister of Andrew Sigourney, one of the first

Huguenots who came over. He saved his sister's life by dragging her by main force through a back door, while the Indians massacred her children, and shot down her husband at his own threshold. To preserve her life was but a cruel kindness.

Gabriel Bernon lived to a patriarchal age, in spite of his early sufferings in France and the wild Indian cries of revenge around his home in Massachusetts. He died rich and prosperous. He had kissed Queen Anne's hand, and become intimate with some of the English nobility, such as Lord Archdale, the Quaker Governor of Carolina, who had lands and governments in the American States. The descendants of the Huguenot refugees repaid in part their debt of gratitude to Massachusetts in various ways during the War of Independence; one, Gabriel Manigault, by advancing a large loan to further the objects of it. Indeed, three of the nine presidents of the old Congress, which conducted the United States through the Revolutionary War, were descendants of the French Protestant refugees. General Francis Marion, who fought bravely under Washington, was of Huguenot descent. In fact, both in England and France, the Huguenot refugees showed themselves temperate, industrious, thoughtful, and intelligent people, full of good principle and strength of character. But all this is implied in the one circumstance that they suffered and emigrated to secure the rights of conscience.

In the State of New York they fondly called their plantation or settlement by the name of the precious city which had been their stronghold and where they had suffered so much. New Rochelle was built on the shore of Long Island Sound, twenty-three miles from New York. On the Saturday afternoons, the inhabitants of New Rochelle harnessed their horses to their carts, to convey the women and little ones; and the men in the prime of life walked all the distance to New York, camping out in their carts in the environs of the city, through the night, till the bell summoned them on Sunday morning to service, in the old Church du Saint Esprit. In the same way they returned on Sunday evening. The old longing for home recorded in Allan Cunningham's ballad —

"It's hame, and it's hame, hame fain would I be;
O, hame, hame, hame, to my ain countree!"—

clung to the breasts, and caused singular melancholy in some of them. There was one old man who went every day down to the seashore, to look and gaze his fill towards the beautiful cruel land where most of his life had been passed. With his face to the east — his eyes strained, as if by force of longing looks he could see the far distant France — he said his morning prayers, and sang one of Clément Marot's hymns. There had been an edition of the Psalms of David, put into French rhyme, ("Pseaumes de David, mis en Rime françoise, par Clément Marot et Théodore de Bèze"), published in as small a form as possible, in order that the book might be concealed in their bosoms, if the Huguenots were surprised in their worship while they lived in France.

Nor were Oxford and New Rochelle the only settlements of the Huguenots in the United States. Farther south again they were welcomed, and found resting-places in Virginia and South Carolina.

I now return to the Huguenots in England. Even during James the Second's reign, collections were made for the refugees; and, in the reign of his successor, fifteen thousand pounds were voted by Parliament "to be distributed among persons of quality, and all such as by age or infirmity were unable to support themselves." There are still, or were, not many years ago, a few survivors of the old Huguenot stock, who go on quarter-day to claim their small benefit from this fund at the Treasury; and doubtless at the time it was granted there were many friendless and helpless to whom the little pensions were inestimable boons. But the greater part were active, strong men, full of good sense and practical talent; and they preferred taking advantage of the national good-will in a more independent form. Their descendants bear honoured names among us. Sir Samuel Romilly, Mrs. Austin, and Miss Harriet Martineau, are three of those that come most prominently before me as I write; but each of these names are suggestive of others in the same families worthy of note. Sir Samuel Romilly's ancestors

came from the south of France, where the paternal estate fell to a distant relation rather than to the son, because the former was a Catholic, while the latter had preferred a foreign country with "freedom to worship God." In Sir Samuel Romilly's account of his father and grandfather, it is easy to detect the southern character predominating. Most affectionate, impulsive, generous, carried away by transports of anger and of grief, tender and true in all his relationships — the reader does not easily forget the father of Sir Samuel Romilly, with his fond adoption of Montaigne's idea, "playing on a flute by the side of his daughter's bed in order to waken her in the morning." No wonder he himself was so beloved! But there was much more demonstration of affection in all these French households, if what I have gathered from their descendants be correct, than we English should ever dare to manifest.

French was the language still spoken among themselves sixty and seventy years after their ancestors had quitted France. In the Romilly family, the father established it as a rule, that French should be always spoken on a Sunday. Forty years later, the lady to whom I have so often alluded was living, an orphan child, with two maiden aunts, in the heart of London city. They always spoke French. English was the foreign language; and a certain pride was cultivated in the little damsel's mind by the fact of her being reminded every now and then that she was a little French girl; bound to be polite, gentle, and attentive in manners; to stand till her elders gave her leave to sit down; to curtsey on entering or leaving a room. She attended her relations to the early market near Spitalfields, where many herbs not in general use in England, and some "weeds," were habitually brought by the market-women for the use of the French people. Burnet, chervil, dandelion, were amongst the number, in order to form the salads which were a principal dish at meals. There were still hereditary schools in the neighbourhood, kept by descendants of the first refugees who established them, and to which the Huguenot families still sent their children. A kind of correspondence was occasionally kept up with the unseen and distant relations in France — third

or fourth cousins it might be. As was to be expected, such correspondence languished and died by slow degrees. But tales of their ancestors' sufferings and escapes beguiled the long winter evenings. Though far away from France, though cast off by her a hundred years before, the gentle old ladies, who had lived all their lives in London, considered France as their country, and England as a strange land. Upstairs, too, was a great chest—the very chest Magdalen Lefebvre had had packed to accompany her in her flight, and escape in the mattress. The stores her fond mother had provided for her *trousseau* were not yet exhausted, though she slept in her grave; and out of them her little orphan descendant was dressed; and when the quaintness of the pattern made the child shrink from putting on so peculiar a dress, she was asked, "Are you not a little French girl? You ought to be proud of wearing a French print — there are none like it in England." In all this, her relations and their circle seem to have differed from the refugee friends of old Mr. Romilly, who, we are told, "desired nothing less than to preserve the memory of their origin; and their chapels were therefore ill-attended. A large uncouth room, the avenues to which were narrow courts and dirty alleys, . . . with irregular unpainted pews, and dusty unplastered walls; a congregation consisting principally of some strange-looking old women scattered here and there," &c. Probably these old ladies looked strange to the child, who recorded these early impressions in after-life, because they clung with fond pride to the dress of their ancestors, and decked themselves out in the rich grotesque raiment which had formed part of their mother's *trousseau*. At any rate, there certainly was a little colony in the heart of the city, at the end of the last century, who took pride in their descent from the suffering Huguenots, who mustered up relics of the old homes and the old times in Normandy or Languedoc. A sword wielded by some great-grandfather in the wars of the League; a gold whistle, such as hung ever ready at the master's girdle, before bells were known in houses, or ready to summon out-of-door labourers; some of the very ornaments sold at the famous curiosity-shop at Warwick for

ladies to hang at their *châtelaines*, within this last ten years, were brought over by the flying Huguenots. And there were precious Bibles, secured by silver clasps and corners; strangely-wrought silver spoons, the handle of which enclosed the bowl; a travelling-case, containing a gold knife, spoon, and fork, and a crystal goblet, on which the coat-of-arms was engraved in gold; all these, and many other relics, tell of the affluence and refinement the refugees left behind for the sake of their religion.

There is yet an hospital (or rather great almshouse) for aged people of French descent somewhere near the City Road, which is supported by the proceeds of land bequeathed (I believe) by some of the first refugees, who were prosperous in trade after settling in England. But it has lost much of its distinctive national character. Fifty or sixty years ago, a visitor might have heard the inmates of this hospital chattering away in antiquated French; now they speak English, for the majority of their ancestors in four generations have been English, and probably some of them do not know a word of French. Each inmate has a comfortable bedroom, a small annuity for clothes, &c., and sits and has meals in a public dining-room. As a little amusing mark of deference to the land of their founders, I may mention that a Mrs. Stephens, who was admitted within the last thirty years, became Madame St. Etienne as soon as she entered the hospital.

I have now told all I know about the Huguenots. I pass the mark to some one else.

MORTON HALL.

CHAPTER I.

OUR old Hall is to be pulled down, and they are going to build streets on the site. I said to my sister, "Ethelinda! if they really pull down Morton Hall, it will be a worse piece of work than the Repeal of the Corn Laws." And, after some consideration she replied, that if she must speak what was on her mind, she would own that she thought the Papists had something to do with it; that they had never forgiven the Morton who had been with Lord Monteagle when he discovered the Gunpowder Plot; for we knew that somewhere in Rome there was a book kept, and which had been kept for generations, giving an account of the secret private history of every English family of note, and registering the names of those to whom the Papists owed either grudges or gratitude.

We were silent for some time; but I am sure the same thought was in both our minds; our ancestor, a Sidebotham, had been a follower of the Morton of that day; it had always been said in the family that he had been with his master, when he went with the Lord Monteagle, and found Guy Fawkes and his dark lantern under the Parliament House; and the question flashed across our minds, Were the Sidebothams marked with a black mark in that terrible mysterious book which was kept under lock and key by the Pope and the Cardinals in Rome? It was terrible; yet, somehow, rather pleasant to think of. So many of the misfortunes which had happened to us through life, and which we had called "mysterious dispensations," but which some of our neighbours had attributed to our want of prudence and foresight, were accounted for at once, if we were objects of the deadly hatred of such a powerful order as the Jesuits; of

whom we had lived in dread ever since we had read the Female Jesuit. Whether this last idea suggested what my sister said next I can't tell; we did know the Female Jesuit's second cousin, so might be said to have literary connections, and from that the startling thought might spring up in my sister's mind, for, said she, "Biddy!" (my name is Bridget, and no one but my sister calls me Biddy) "suppose you write some account of Morton Hall; we have known much in our time of the Mortons, and it will be a shame if they pass away completely from men's memories while we can speak or write." I was pleased with the notion, I confess; but I felt ashamed to agree to it all at once, though even as I objected for modesty's sake, it came into my mind how much I had heard of the old place in its former days, and how it was perhaps all I could now do for the Mortons, under whom our ancestors had lived as tenants for more than three hundred years. So at last I agreed; and, for fear of mistakes, I showed it to Mr. Swinton, or young curate, who has put it quite in order for me.

Morton Hall is situated about five miles from the centre of Drumble. It stands on the outskirts of a village, which, when the Hall was built, was probably as large as Drumble in those days; and even I can remember when there was a long piece of rather lonely road, with high hedges on either side, between Morton village and Drumble. Now it is all street, and Morton seems but a suburb of the great town near. Our farm stood where Liverpool Street runs now; and people used to come snipe-shooting just where the Baptist Chapel is built. Our farm must have been older than the Hall, for we had a date of 1460 on one of the cross-beams. My father was rather proud of this advantage, for the Hall had no date older than 1554; and I remember his affronting Mrs. Dawson, the housekeeper, by dwelling too much on this circumstance one evening when she came to drink tea with my mother, when Ethelinda and I were mere children. But my mother, seeing that Mrs. Dawson would never allow that any house in the parish could be older than the Hall, and that she was getting very warm, and almost insinuating that the Sidebothams had forged the date to disparage the

Squire's family, and set themselves up as having the older blood, asked Mrs. Dawson to tell us the story of old Sir John Morton before we went to bed; I slyly reminded my father that Jack, our man, was not always so careful as might be in housing the Alderney in good time in the autumn evenings. So he started up, and went off to see after Jack; and Mrs. Dawson and we drew nearer the fire to hear the story about Sir John.

Sir John Morton had lived some time about the Restoration. The Mortons had taken the right side, so when Oliver Cromwell came into power he gave away their lands to one of his Puritan followers — a man who had been but a praying, canting, Scotch pedlar, till the war broke out; and Sir John had to go and live with his royal master at Bruges. The upstart's name was Carr, who came to live at Morton Hall; and, I'm proud to say, we — I mean our ancestors — led him a pretty life. He had hard work to get any rent at all from the tenantry, who knew their duty better than to pay it to a Roundhead. If he took the law to them, the law officers fared so badly, that they were shy of coming out to Morton — all along that lonely road I told you of — again. Strange noises were heard about the Hall, which got the credit of being haunted: but as those noises were never heard before or since that Richard Carr lived there, I leave you to guess if the evil spirits did not know well over whom they had power — over schismatic rebels, and no one else. They durst not trouble the Mortons, who were true and loyal, and were faithful followers of King Charles in word and deed. At last Old Oliver died, and folks did say that on that wild and stormy night his voice was heard high up in the air, where you hear the flocks of wild geese skirl, crying out for his true follower Richard Carr to accompany him in the terrible chase the fiends were giving him before carrying him down to hell. Anyway Richard Carr died within a week — summoned by the dead or not, he went his way down to his master, and his master's master.

Then his daughter Alice came into possession. Her mother was somehow related to General Monk, who was beginning to come into power about that time. So when Charles the Second

came back to his throne, and many of the sneaking Puritans had to quit their ill-gotten land, and turn to the right about, Alice Carr was still left at Morton Hall to queen it there. She was taller than most women, and a great beauty I have heard. But, for all her beauty, she was a stern, hard woman. The tenants had known her to be hard in her father's lifetime, but now that she was the owner and had the power, she was worse than ever. She hated the Stuarts worse than ever her father had done; had calves' head for dinner every thirtieth of January; and when the first twenty-ninth of May came round, and every mother's son in the village gilded his oak leaves, and wore them in his hat, she closed the windows of the great hall with her own hands, and sate throughout the day in darkness and mourning. People did not like to go against her by force, because she was a young and beautiful woman. It was said the King got her cousin, the Duke of Albemarle, to ask her to court just as courteously as if she had been the Queen of Sheba, and King Charles, Solomon, praying her to visit him in Jerusalem. But she would not go; not she! She lived a very lonely life, for now the King had got his own again, no servant but her nurse would stay with her in the Hall; and none of the tenants would pay her any money for all that her father had purchased the lands from the Parliament, and paid the price down in good red gold.

All this time, Sir John was somewhere in the Virginian plantations; and the ships sailed from thence only twice a year: but his royal master had sent for him home; and home he came that second summer after the restoration. No one knew if Mistress Alice had heard of his landing in England or not; all the villagers and tenantry knew and were not surprised, and turned out in their best dresses and with great branches of oak to welcome him as he rode into the village one July morning, with many gay-looking gentlemen by his side, laughing and talking and making-merry, and speaking gaily and pleasantly to the village people. They came in on the opposite side to the Drumble Road; indeed Drumble was nothing of a place then, as I have told you. Between the last cottage in the village and

the gates to the old Hall, there was a shady part of the road, where the branches nearly met overhead, and made a green gloom. If you'll notice, when many people are talking merrily out of doors in sunlight, they will stop talking for an instant, when they come into the cool green shade, and either be silent for some little time, or else speak graver and slower and softer. And so old people say those gay gentlemen did; for several people followed to see Alice Carr's pride taken down. They used to tell how the cavaliers had to bow their plumed hats in passing under the unlopped and drooping boughs. I fancy Sir John expected that the lady would have rallied her friends, and got ready for a sort of battle to defend the entrance to the house; but she had no friends. She had no nearer relations than the Duke of Albemarle, and he was mad with her for having refused to come to court, and so save her estate according to his advice.

Well, Sir John rode on, in silence; the tramp of the many horses' feet, and the clumping sound of the clogs of the village people were all that was heard. Heavy as the great gate was, they swung it wide on its hinges, and up they rode to the Hall steps, where the lady stood, in her close plain Puritan dress, her cheeks one crimson flush, her great eyes flashing fire, and no one behind her, or with her, or near her, or to be seen, but the old trembling nurse catching at her gown in pleading terror. Sir John was taken aback; he could not go out with swords and war-like weapons against a woman; his very preparations for forcing an entrance made him ridiculous in his own eyes, and he well knew in the eyes of his gay scornful comrades too; so he turned him round about, and bade them stay where they were, while he rode close to the steps, and spoke to the young lady; and there they saw him, hat in hand, speaking to her; and she, lofty and unmoved, holding her own as if she had been a sovereign queen with an army at her back. What they said, no one heard; but he rode back, very grave and much changed in his look, though his grey eye showed more hawk-like than ever, as if seeing the way to his end, though as yet afar off. He was not one to be jested with before his face; so when he professed

to have changed his mind, and not to wish to disturb so fair a lady in possession, he and his cavaliers rode back to the village inn, and roystered there all day, and feasted the tenantry, cutting down the branches that had incommoded them in their morning's ride, to make a bonfire of on the village green, in which they burnt a figure, which some called Old Noll, and others Richard Carr: and it might do for either, folks said, for unless they had given it the name of a man, most people would have taken it for a forked log of wood.

But the lady's nurse told the villagers afterwards that Mistress Alice went in from the sunny Hall steps into the chill house shadow, and sate her down and wept as her poor faithful servant had never seen her do before, and could not have imagined her proud young lady ever doing. All through that summer's day she cried; and if for very weariness she ceased for a time, and only sighed as if her heart was breaking, they heard through the upper windows — which were open because of the heat — the village bells ringing merrily through the trees, and bursts of choruses to gay cavalier songs, all in favour of the Stuarts. All the young lady said was once or twice, "Oh God! I am very friendless!" — and the old nurse knew it was true, and could not contradict her; and always thought, as she said long after, that such weary weeping showed there was some great sorrow at hand.

I suppose it was the dreariest sorrow that ever a proud woman had; but it came in the shape of a gay wedding. How the village never knew. The gay gentlemen rode away from Morton the next day as lightly and carelessly as if they had attained their end and Sir John had taken possession; and, by-and-by, the nurse came timorously out to market in the village, and Mistress Alice was met in the wood walks just as grand and as proud as ever in her ways, only a little more pale and a little more sad. The truth was, as I have been told, that she and Sir John had each taken a fancy to each other in that parley they held on the Hall steps; she, in the deep wild way in which she took the impressions of her whole life, deep down, as if they were burnt in. Sir John was a gallant-looking man, and had a

kind of foreign grace and courtliness about him. The way he fancied her was very different — a man's way, they tell me. She was a beautiful woman to be tamed, and made to come to his beck and call; and perhaps he read in her softening eyes that she might be won, and so all legal troubles about the possession of the estate come to an end in an easy pleasant manner. He came to stay with friends in the neighbourhood; he was met in her favourite walks with his plumed hat in his hand pleading with her, and she looking softer and far more lovely than ever; and lastly, the tenants were told of the marriage then nigh at hand.

After they were wedded he stayed for a time with her at the Hall, and then off back to court. They do say that her obstinate refusal to go with him to London was the cause of their first quarrel; but such fierce strong wills would quarrel the first day of their wedded life. She said that the court was no place for an honest woman; but surely Sir John knew best, and she might have trusted him to take care of her. However, he left her all alone; and at first she cried most bitterly, and then she took to her old pride, and was more haughty and gloomy than ever. By-and-by she found out hidden conventicles; and, as Sir John never stinted her of money, she gathered the remnants of the old Puritan party about her, and tried to comfort herself with long prayers, snuffled through the nose, for the absence of her husband, but it was of no use. Treat her as he would she loved him still with a terrible love. Once, they say, she put on her waiting-maid's dress, and stole up to London to find out what kept him there; and something she saw or heard that changed her altogether, for she came back as if her heart was broken. They say that the only person she loved with all the wild strength of her heart, had proved false to her; and if so, what wonder! At the best of times she was but a gloomy creature, and it was a great honour for her father's daughter to be wedded to a Morton. She should not have expected too much.

After her despondency came her religion. Every old Puritan preacher in the country was welcome at Morton Hall. Surely

that was enough to disgust Sir John. The Mortons had never cared to have much religion, but what they had, had been good of its kind hitherto. So, when Sir John came down wanting a gay greeting and a tender show of love, his lady exhorted him, and prayed over him, and quoted the last Puritan text she had heard at him; and he swore at her, and at her preachers; and made a deadly oath that none of them should find harbour or welcome in any house of his. She looked scornfully back at him, and said she had yet to learn in what county of England the house he spoke of was to be found; but in the house her father purchased, and she inherited, all who preached the Gospel should be welcome, let kings make what laws, and kings' minions swear what oaths they would. He said nothing to this; the worst sign for her; but he set his teeth at her; and in an hour's time he rode away back to the French witch that had beguiled him.

Before he went away from Morton he set his spies. He longed to catch his wife in his fierce clutch, and punish her for defying him. She had made him hate her with her Puritanical ways. He counted the days till the messenger came, splashed up to the top of his deep leather boots, to say that my lady had invited the canting Puritan preachers of the neighbourhood to a prayer-meeting, and a dinner, and a night's rest at her house. Sir John smiled as he gave the messenger five gold pieces for his pains; and straight took post-horses, and rode long days till he got to Morton; and only just in time; for it was the very day of the prayer-meeting. Dinners were then at one o'clock in the country. The great people in London might keep late hours, and dine at three in the afternoon or so; but the Mortons they always clung to the good old ways, and, as the church bells were ringing twelve when Sir John came riding into the village, he knew he might slacken bridle; and, casting one glance at the smoke which came hurrying up as if from a newly-mended fire, just behind the wood, where he knew the Hall-kitchen chimney stood, Sir John stopped at the smithy, and pretended to question the smith about his horse's shoes; but he took little heed of the answers, being more occupied by an old

serving-man from the Hall, who had been loitering about the smithy half the morning, as folk thought afterwards to keep some appointment with Sir John. When their talk was ended, Sir John lifted himself straight in his saddle; cleared his throat, and spoke out aloud: —

“I grieve to hear your lady is so ill.” The smith wondered at this, for all the village knew of the coming feast at the Hall; the spring-chickens had been bought up, and the cade-lambs killed; for the preachers in those days, if they fasted they fasted, if they fought they fought, if they prayed they prayed, sometimes for three hours at a standing; and if they feasted they feasted, and knew what good eating was, believe me.

“My lady ill?” said the smith, as if he doubted the old prim serving-man’s word. And the latter would have chopped in with an angry asseveration (he had been at Worcester and fought on the right side), but Sir John cut him short.

“My lady is very ill, good Master Fox. It touches her here,” continued he, pointing to his head. “I am comé down to take her to London, where the King’s own physician shall prescribe for her.” And he rode slowly up to the hall.

The lady was as well as ever she had been in her life, and happier than she had often been — for in a few minutes some of those whom she esteemed so highly would be about her; some of those who had known and valued her father — her dead father, to whom her sorrowful heart turned in its woe, as the only true lover and friend she had ever had on earth. Many of the preachers would have ridden far — was all in order in their rooms, and on the table in the great dining parlour? She had got into restless hurried ways of late. She went round below, and then she mounted the great oak staircase to see if the tower bed-chamber was all in order for old Master Hilton, the oldest among the preachers. Meanwhile, the maidens below were carrying in mighty cold rounds of spiced beef, quarters of lamb, chicken pies, and all such provisions, when, suddenly, they knew not how, they found themselves each seized by strong arms, their aprons thrown over their heads, after the manner of a gag, and themselves borne out of the house on to the

poultry green behind, where with threats of what worse might befall them, they were sent with many a shameful word — (Sir John could not always command his men, many of whom had been soldiers in the French wars) — back into the village. They scuttled away like frightened hares. My lady was strewing the white-headed preacher's room with the last year's lavender, and stirring up the sweet-pot on the dressing-table, when she heard a step on the echoing stairs. It was no measured tread of any Puritan; it was the clang of a man of war coming nearer and nearer, with loud rapid strides. She knew the step; her heart stopped beating, not for fear, but because she loved Sir John even yet; and she took a step forward to meet him, and then stood still and trembled, for the flattering false thought came before her that he might have come yet in some quick impulse of reviving love, and that his hasty step might be prompted by the passionate tenderness of a husband. But when he reached the door, she looked as calm and indifferent as ever.

“My lady,” said he, “you are gathering your friends to some feast; may I know who are thus invited to revel in my house? Some graceless fellows, I see, from the store of meat and drink below: wine-bibbers and drunkards, I fear.”

But, by the working glance of his eye she saw that he knew all; and she spoke with a cold distinctness:

“Master Ephraim Dixon, Master Zerubbabel Hopkins, Master Help-me-or-I-perish Perkins, and some other godly ministers, come to spend the afternoon in my house.”

He went to her, and in his rage he struck her. She put up no arm to save herself, but reddened a little with the pain, and then drawing her neckerchief on one side, she looked at the crimson mark on her white neck.

“It serves me right,” she said. “I wedded one of my father's enemies; one of those who would have hunted the old man to death. I gave my father's enemy house and lands, when he came as a beggar to my door; — I followed my wicked, wayward heart in this, instead of minding my dying father's words. Strike again, and avenge him yet more!”

But he would not, because she bade him. He unloosed his sash, and bound her arms tight, tight together, and she never struggled or spoke. Then pushing her so that she was obliged to sit down on the bed side:

“Sit there,” he said, “and hear how I will welcome the old hypocrites you have dared to ask to my house — my house and my ancestors’ house, long before your father — a canting pedlar — hawked his goods about, and cheated honest men.”

And, opening the chamber window right above those Hall steps where she had awaited him in her maiden beauty scarce three short years ago, he greeted the company of preachers as they rode up to the Hall with such terrible hideous language, (my lady had provoked him past all bearing, you see,) that the old men turned round aghast, and made the best of their way back to their own places.

Meanwhile Sir John’s serving-men below had obeyed their master’s orders. They had gone through the house, closing every window, every shutter, and every door, but leaving all else just as it was: — the cold meats on the table, the hot meats on the spit, the silver flagons on the side-board — all just as if it were ready for a feast; and then Sir John’s head-servant, he that I spoke of before, came up and told his master all was ready.

“Is the horse and the pillion all ready? Then you and I must be my lady’s tire-women:” and as it seemed to her in mockery, but in reality with a deep purpose, they dressed the helpless woman in her riding things all awry, and, strange and disorderly, Sir John carried her down stairs; and he and his man bound her on the pillion; and Sir John mounted before. The man shut and locked the great house-door, and the echoes of the clang went through the empty Hall with an ominous sound. “Throw the key,” said Sir John, “deep into the mere yonder. My lady may go seek it if she lists, when next I set her arms at liberty. Till then I know whose house Morton Hall shall be called.”

"Sir John! it shall be called the Devil's House, and you shall be his steward."

But the poor lady had better have held her tongue; for Sir John only laughed, and told her to rave on. As he passed through the village, with his serving-men riding behind, the tenantry came out and stood at their doors, and pitied him for having a mad wife, and praised him for his care of her, and of the chance he gave her of amendment by taking her up to be seen by the King's physician. But somehow the Hall got an ugly name; the roast and boiled meats, the ducks, the chickens had time to drop into dust, before any human being now dared to enter in; or, indeed, had any right to enter in, for Sir John never came back to Morton; and as for my lady, some said she was dead, and some said she was mad and shut up in London, and some said Sir John had taken her to a convent abroad.

"And what did become of her?" asked we, creeping up to Mrs. Dawson.

"Nay, how should I know?"

"But what do you think?" we asked pertinaciously.

"I cannot tell. I have heard that after Sir John was killed at the battle of the Boyne she got loose and came wandering back to Morton, to her old nurse's house; but, indeed, she was mad then out and out, and I've no doubt Sir John had seen it coming on. She used to have visions and dream dreams: and some thought her a prophetess; and some thought her fairly crazy. What she said about the Mortons was awful. She doomed them to die out of the land, and their house to be razed to the ground, while pedlars and huxters such as her own people, her father, had been should dwell where the knightly Mortons had once lived. One winter's night she strayed away, and the next morning they found the poor crazy woman frozen to death in Drumble meeting-house yard; and the Mr. Morton who had succeeded to Sir John had her decently buried where she was found, by the side of her father's grave."

We were silent for a time. "And when was the old Hall opened, Mrs. Dawson, please?"

"Oh! when the Mr. Morton, our Squire Morton's grand-

father, came into possession. He was a distant cousin of Sir John's, a much quieter kind of man. He had all the old rooms opened wide, and aired, and fumigated; and the strange fragments of musty food were collected and burnt in the yard; but somehow that old dining-parlour had always a charnel-house smell, and no one ever liked making merry in it — thinking of the grey old preachers, whose ghosts might be even then scenting the meats afar off, and trooping unbidden to a feast, that was not that of which they were baulked. I was glad for one when the Squire's father built another dining-room; and no servant in the house will go an errand into the old dining-parlour after dark, I can assure ye."

"I wonder if the way the last Mr. Morton had to sell his land to the people at Drumble had anything to do with old Lady Morton's prophecy," said my mother, musingly.

"Not at all," said Mrs. Dawson, sharply. "My lady was crazy, and her words not to be minded. I should like to see the cotton-spinners of Drumble offer to purchase land from the Squire. Besides, there's a strict entail now. They can't purchase the land if they would. A set of trading pedlars indeed!"

I remember Ethelinda and I looked at each other at this word "pedlars;" which was the very word she had put into Sir John's mouth when taunting his wife with her father's low birth and calling. We thought, "We shall see."

Alas! we have seen.

Soon after that evening our good old friend Mrs. Dawson died. I remember it well, because Ethelinda and I were put into mourning for the first time in our lives. A dear little brother of ours had died only the year before, and then my father and mother had decided that we were too young; that there was no necessity for their incurring the expense of black frocks. We mourned for the little delicate darling in our hearts, I know; and to this day I often wonder what it would have been to have had a brother. But when Mrs. Dawson died it became a sort of duty we owed to the Squire's family to go into black, and very proud and pleased Ethelinda and I were with our new

frocks. I remember dreaming Mrs. Dawson was alive again, and crying, because I thought my new frock would be taken away from me. But all this has nothing to do with Morton Hall.

When I first became aware of the greatness of the Squire's station in life, his family consisted of himself, his wife (a frail delicate lady), his only son, "little master," as Mrs. Dawson was allowed to call him, "the young Squire," as we in the village always termed him. His name was John Marmaduke. He was always called John; and after Mrs. Dawson's story of the old Sir John, I used to wish he might not bear that ill-omened name. He used to ride through the village in his bright scarlet coat, his long fair curling hair falling over his lace collar, and his broad black hat and feather shading his merry blue eyes. Ethelinda and I thought then, and I always shall think, there never was such a boy. He had a fine high spirit too of his own, and once horsewhipped a groom twice as big as himself, who had thwarted him. To see him and Miss Phillis go tearing through the village on their pretty Arabian horses, laughing as they met the west wind, and their long golden curls flying behind them, you would have thought them brother and sister, rather than nephew and aunt; for Miss Phillis was the Squire's sister, much younger than himself; indeed at the time I speak of, I don't think she could have been above seventeen, and the young Squire, her nephew, was nearly ten. I remember Mrs. Dawson sending for my mother and me up to the Hall that we might see Miss Phillis dressed ready to go with her brother to a ball given at some great lord's house to Prince William of Gloucester, nephew to good old George the Third.

When Mrs. Elizabeth, Mrs. Morton's maid, saw us at tea in Mrs. Dawson's room, she asked Ethelinda and me if we would not like to come into Miss Phillis's dressing-room, and watch her dress; and then she said, if we could promise to keep from touching anything she would make interest for us to go. We would have promised to stand on our heads, and would have tried to do so too, to earn such a privilege. So in we went, and stood together hand-in-hand up in a corner out of the way, feeling very red, and shy, and hot, till Miss Phillis put us at

our ease by playing all manner of comical tricks, just to make us laugh, which at last we did outright in spite of all our endeavours to be grave, lest Mrs. Elizabeth should complain of us to my mother. I recollect the scent of the *maréchale* powder with which Miss Phillis's hair was just sprinkled; and how she shook her head, like a young colt, to work the hair loose which Mrs. Elizabeth was straining up over a cushion. Then Mrs. Elizabeth would try a little of Mrs. Morton's rouge; and Miss Phillis would wash it off with a wet towel, saying that she liked her own paleness better than any performer's colour; and when Mrs. Elizabeth wanted just to touch her cheeks once more, she hid herself behind the great arm-chair, peeping out with her sweet merry face, first at one side and then at another, till we all heard the Squire's voice at the door, asking her, if she was dressed, to come and show herself to Madam, her sister-in-law; for, as I said, Mrs. Morton was a great invalid, and unable to go out to any grand parties like this. We were all silent in an instant; and even Mrs. Elizabeth thought no more of the rouge, but how to get Miss Phillis's beautiful blue dress on quick enough. She had cherry-coloured knots in her hair, and her breast-knots were of the same ribbon. Her gown was open in front, to a quilted white silk skirt. We felt very shy of her as she stood there fully dressed — she looked so much grander than anything we had ever seen; and it was like a relief when Mrs. Elizabeth told us to go down to Mrs. Dawson's parlour, where my mother was sitting all this time.

Just as we were telling how merry and comical Miss Phillis had been, in came a footman. "Mrs. Dawson," said he, "the Squire bids me ask you to go with Mrs. Sidebotham into the west parlour, to have a look at Miss Morton before she goes." We went too, clinging to my mother. Miss Phillis looked rather shy as we came in, and stood just by the door. I think we all must have shown her that we had never seen anything so beautiful, as she was, in our lives before; for she went very scarlet at our fixed gaze of admiration, and to relieve herself she began to play all manner of antics, whirling round, and making cheeses with her rich silk petticoat, unfurling her fan

(a present from Madam to complete her dress), and peeping first on one side and then on the other, just as she had done upstairs; and then catching hold of her nephew, and insisting that he should dance a minuet with her until the carriage came, which proposal made him very angry, as it was an insult to his manhood (at nine years old) to suppose he could dance. "It was all very well for girls to make fools of themselves," he said, "but it did not do for men." And Ethelinda and I thought we had never heard so fine a speech before. But the carriage came before we had half-feasted our eyes enough; and the Squire came from his wife's room to order the little master to bed, and hand his sister to the carriage.

I remember a good deal of talk about royal dukes and unequal marriages that night. I believe Miss Phillis did dance with Prince William; and I have often heard that she bore away the bell at the ball, and that no one came near her for beauty and pretty merry ways. In a day or two after I saw her scampering through the village, looking just as she did before she had danced with a royal duke. We all thought she would marry some one great, and used to look out for the lord who was to take her away. But poor Madam died, and there was no one but Miss Phillis to comfort her brother, for the young Squire was gone away to some great school down south; and Miss Phillis grew grave, and reined in her pony to keep by the Squire's side, when he rode out on his steady old mare in his lazy careless way.

We did not hear so much of the doings at the hall now Mrs. Dawson was dead; so I cannot tell how it was; but by-and-by there was a talk of bills that were once paid weekly, being now allowed to run to quarter-day; and then, instead of being settled every quarter-day, they were put off to Christmas; and many said they had hard enough work to get their money then. A buzz went through the village that the young Squire played high at college, and that he made away with more money than his father could afford. But when he came down to Morton, he was as handsome as ever; and I, for one, never believed evil of him; though I'll allow others might cheat him, and he never

suspect it. His aunt was as fond of him as ever; and he of her. Many is the time I have seen them out walking together, sometimes sad enough, sometimes merry as ever. By-and-by, my father heard of sales of small pieces of land, not included in the entail; and at last, things got so bad, that the very crops were sold yet green upon the ground, for any price folks would give, so that there was but ready money paid. The Squire at length gave way entirely, and never left the house; and the young master in London; and poor Miss Phillis used to go about trying to see after the workmen and labourers, and save what she could. By this time she would be above thirty; Ethelinda and I were nineteen and twenty-one when my mother died, and that was some years before this. Well, at last the Squire died; they do say of a broken heart at his son's extravagance; and, though the lawyers kept it very close, it began to be rumoured that Miss Phillis's fortune had gone too. Any way the creditors came down on the estate like wolves. It was entailed, and it could not be sold; but they put it into the hands of a lawyer who was to get what he could out of it, and have no pity for the poor young Squire, who had not a roof for his head. Miss Phillis went to live by herself in a little cottage in the village, at the end of the property, which the lawyer allowed her to have because he could not let it to any one, it was so tumble-down and old. We never knew what she lived on, poor lady, but she said she was well in health, which was all we durst ask about. She came to see my father just before he died; and he seemed made bold with the feeling that he was a dying man; so he asked, what I had longed to know for many a year, where was the young Squire; he had never been seen in Morton since his father's funeral. Miss Phillis said he was gone abroad; but in what part he was then, she herself hardly knew; only she had a feeling that, sooner or later, he would come back to the old place; where she should strive to keep a home for him whenever he was tired of wandering about, and trying to make his fortune.

“Trying to make his fortune still?” asked my father, his questioning eyes saying more than his words. Miss Phillis

shook her head with a sad meaning in her face; and we understood it all. He was at some French gaming-table, if he was not at an English one.

Miss Phillis was right. It might be a year after my father's death when he came back, looking old and grey and worn. He came to our door just after we had barred it one winter's evening. Ethelinda and I still lived at the farm, trying to keep it up and make it pay; but it was hard work. We heard a step coming up the straight pebble-walk; and then it stopped right at our door, under the very porch, and we heard a man's breathing, quick and short.

"Shall I open the door?" said I.

"No, wait!" said Ethelinda; for we lived alone, and there was no cottage near us. We held our breaths. There came a knock.

"Who's there?" I cried.

"Where does Miss Morton live — Miss Phillis?"

We were not sure if we would answer him; for she, like us, lived alone.

"Who's there?" again said I.

"Your master," he answered, proud and angry. "My name is John Morton. Where does Miss Phillis live?"

We had the door unbarred in a trice, and begged him to come in; to pardon our rudeness. We would have given him of our best as was his due from us; but he only listened to the directions we gave him to his aunt's, and took no notice of our apologies.

CHAPTER II.

UP to this time we had felt it rather impertinent to tell each other of our individual silent wonder as to what Miss Phillis lived on; but I know in our hearts we each thought about it, with a kind of respectful pity for her fallen low estate. Miss Phillis, that we remembered like an angel for beauty, and like a little princess for the imperious sway she exercised, and which was such sweet compulsion that we had all felt proud to be her slaves; Miss Phillis was now a worn, plain woman, in homely

dress, tending towards old age; and looking — (at that time I dared not have spoken so insolent a thought, not even to myself) — but she did look as if she had hardly the proper nourishing food she required. One day, I remember Mrs. Jones the butcher's wife — (she was a Drumble person) — saying in her saucy way, that she was not surprised to see Miss Morton so bloodless and pale, for she only treated herself to a Sunday's dinner of meat, and lived on slop and bread-and-butter all the rest of the week. Ethelinda put on her severe face — a look that I am afraid of to this day — and said, "Mrs. Jones, do you suppose Miss Morton can eat your half-starved meat? You do not know how choice and dainty she is, as becomes one born and bred like her. What was it we had to bring for her only last Saturday from the grand new butcher's in Drumble, Biddy?" — (We took our eggs to market in Drumble every Saturday, for the cotton-spinners would give us a higher price than the Morton people; the more fools they!)

I thought it rather cowardly of Ethelinda to put the story-telling on me; but she always thought a great deal of saving her soul; more than I did, I am afraid, for I made answer, as bold as a lion, "Two sweat-breads, at a shilling a-piece; and a fore-quarter of house-lamb, at eighteen-pence a pound." So off went Mrs. Jones in a huff, saying "their meat was good enough for Mrs. Donkin the great mill-owner's widow, and might serve a beggarly Morton any day." When we were alone, I said to Ethelinda, "I'm afraid we shall have to pay for our lies at the great day of account," and Ethelinda answered very sharply — (she's a good sister in the main) — "Speak for yourself, Biddy. I never said a word. I only asked questions. How could I help it if you told lies? I'm sure I wondered at you, how glib you spoke out what was not true." But I knew she was glad I told the lies in her heart.

After the poor Squire came to live with his aunt, Miss Phillis, we ventured to speak a bit to ourselves. We were sure they were pinched. They looked like it. He had a bad hacking cough at times; though he was so dignified and proud he would never cough when any one was near. I have seen him up before

it was day, sweeping the dung off the roads, to try and get enough to manure the little plot of ground behind the cottage, which Miss Phillis had let alone, but which her nephew used to dig in and till; for, said he, one day, in his grand slow way, "he was always fond of experiments in agriculture." Ethelinda and I do believe that the two or three score of cabbages he raised were all they had to live on that winter, besides the bit of meal and tea they got at the village shop.

One Friday night I said to Ethelinda, "It is a shame to take these eggs to Drumble to sell, and never to offer one to the Squire, on whose lands we were born." She answered, "I have thought so many a time; but how can we do it? I, for one, dare not offer them to the Squire; and as for Miss Phillis it would seem like impertinence." "I'll try at it," said I.

So that night I took some eggs — fresh yellow eggs from our own pheasant hen, the like of which there were not for twenty miles round — and I laid them softly after dusk on one of the little stone seats in the porch of Miss Phillis's cottage. But, alas! when we went to market at Drumble, early the next morning, there were my eggs all shattered and splashed, making an ugly yellow pool in the road just in front of the cottage. I had meant to have followed it up by a chicken or so; but I saw now that it would never do. Miss Phillis came now and then to call on us; she was a little more high and distant than she had been when a girl, and we felt we must keep our place. I suppose we had affronted the young Squire, for he never came near our house.

Well! there came a hard winter, and provisions rose; and Ethelinda and I had much ado to make ends meet. If it had not been for my sister's good management, we should have been in debt I know; but she proposed that we should go without dinner, and only have a breakfast and a tea, to which I agreed, you may be sure.

One baking day I had made some cakes for tea — potato-cakes we called them. They had a savoury hot smell about them; and, to tempt Ethelinda, who was not quite well, I cooked a rasher of bacon. Just as we were sitting down Miss

Phillis knocked at our door. We let her in. God only knows how white and haggard she looked. The heat of our kitchen made her totter, and for a while she could not speak. But all the time she looked at the food on the table as if she feared to shut her eyes lest it should all vanish away. It was an eager stare like that of some animal, poor soul! "If I durst," said Ethelinda, wishing to ask her to share our meal, but being afraid to speak out. I did not speak, but handed her the good hot buttered cake; on which she seized, and putting it up to her lips as if to taste it, she fell back in her chair, crying.

We had never seen a Morton cry before; and it was something awful. We stood silent and aghast. She recovered herself, but did not taste the food; on the contrary, she covered it up with both her hands, as if afraid of losing it. "If you'll allow me," said she, in a stately kind of way to make up for our having seen her crying, "I'll take it to my nephew." And she got up to go away; but she could hardly stand for very weakness, and had to sit down again; she smiled at us, and said she was a little dizzy, but it would soon go off; but as she smiled, the bloodless lips were drawn far back over her teeth, making her face seem somehow like a death's head. "Miss Morton," said I, "do honour us by taking tea with us this once. The Squire, your father, once took a luncheon with my father, and we are proud of it to this day." I poured her out some tea, which she drank; the food she shrank away from as if the very sight of it turned her sick again. But when she rose to go she looked at it with her sad wolfish eyes, as if she could not leave it; and at last she broke into a low cry, and said, "Oh, Bridget, we are starving! we are starving for want of food! I can bear it; I don't mind; but he suffers, oh, how he suffers! Let me take him food for this one night."

We could hardly speak; our hearts were in our throats, and the tears ran down our cheeks like rain. We packed up a basket, and carried it to her very door, never venturing to speak a word, for we knew what it must have cost her to say that. When we left her at the cottage, we made her our usual deep courtesy, but she fell upon our necks, and kissed us. For

several nights after she hovered round our house about dusk; but she would never come in again, and face us in candle or fire light, much less meet us by daylight. We took out food to her as regularly as might be, and gave it to her in silence, and with the deepest courtesies we could make, we felt so honoured. We had many plans now she had permitted us to know of her distress. We hoped she would allow us to go on serving her in some way as became us as Sidebothams. But one night she never came; we stayed out in the cold bleak wind looking into the dark for her thin worn figure; all in vain. Late the next afternoon the young Squire lifted the latch, and stood right in the middle of our house-place. The roof was low overhead, and made lower by the deep beams supporting the floor above; he stooped as he looked at us, and tried to form words, but no sound came out of his lips. I never saw such gaunt woe; no, never! At last he took me by the shoulder, and led me out of the house.

“Come with me!” he said, when we were in the open air, as if that gave him strength to speak audibly. I needed no second word. We entered Miss Phillis’s cottage; a liberty I had never taken before. What little furniture was there, it was clear to be seen were cast-off fragments of the old splendour of Morton Hall. No fire. Grey wood ashes lay on the hearth. An old settee, once white and gold, now doubly shabby in its fall from its former estate. On it lay Miss Phillis, very pale; very still; her eyes shut.

“Tell me!” he gasped. “Is she dead? I think she is asleep; but she looks so strange — as if she might be —” He could not say the awful word again. I stooped, and felt no warmth; only a cold chill atmosphere seemed to surround her.

“She is dead!” I replied at length. “Oh, Miss Phillis! Miss Phillis!” and, like a fool, I began to cry. But he sate down without a tear, and looked vacantly at the empty hearth. I dared not cry any more when I saw him so stony sad. I did not know what to do. I could not leave him; and yet I had no excuse for staying. I went up to Miss Phillis, and softly arranged the grey ragged locks about her face.

"Aye!" said he. "She must be laid out. Who so fit to do it as you and your sister, children of good old Robert Sidebotham."

"Qh! my master," I said, "this is no fit place for you. Let me fetch my sister to sit up with me all night; and honour us by sleeping at our poor little cottage."

I did not expect he would have done it; but after a few minutes' silence he agreed to my proposal. I hastened home, and told Ethelinda, and both of us crying, we heaped up the fire, and spread the table with food, and made up a bed in one corner of the floor. While I stood ready to go I saw Ethelinda open the great chest in which we kept our treasures; and out she took a fine Holland shift that had been one of my mother's wedding shifts; and, seeing what she was after, I went upstairs and brought down a piece of rare old lace, a good deal darned to be sure, but still old Brussels point, bequeathed to me long ago by my god-mother, Mrs. Dawson. We huddled these things under our cloaks, locked the door behind us, and set out to do all we could now for poor Miss Phillis. We found the Squire sitting just as we left him; I hardly knew if he understood me when I told him how to unlock our door, and gave him the key; though I spoke as distinctly as ever I could for the choking in my throat. At last he rose and went; and Ethelinda and I composed her poor thin limbs to decent rest, and wrapped her in the fine Holland shift; and then I plaited up my lace into a close cap to tie up the wasted features. When all was done we looked upon her from a little distance.

"A Morton to die of hunger!" said Ethelinda solemnly. "We should not have dared to think that such a thing was within the chances of life; do you remember that evening, when you and I were little children, and she a merry young lady peeping at us from behind her fan?"

We did not cry any more; we felt very still and awe-struck. After a while I said, "I wonder if after all the young Squire did go to our house. He had a strange look about him. If I dared I would go and see." I opened the door; the night was black as pitch; the air very still. "I'll go," said I; and off I went

not meeting a creature, for it was long past eleven. I reached our house; the window was long and low, and the shutters were old and shrunk. I could peep between them well, and see all that was going on. He was there sitting over the fire, never shedding a tear; but seeming as if he saw his past life in the embers. The food we had prepared was untouched. Once or twice, during my long watch (I was more than an hour away), he turned towards the food, and made as though he would have eaten it, and then shuddered back; but at last he seized it, and tore it with his teeth, and laughed and rejoiced over it like some starved animal. I could not keep from crying then. He gorged himself with great morsels; and when he could eat no more it seemed as if his strength for suffering had come back; he threw himself on the bed, and such a passion of despair I never heard of, much less ever saw. I could not bear to witness it. The dead Miss Phillis lay calm and still; her trials were over. I would go back and watch with Ethelinda.

When the pale grey morning dawn stole in, making us shiver and shake after our vigil, the Squire returned. We were both mortal afraid of him, we knew not why. He looked quiet enough — the lines were worn deep before — no new traces were there. He stood and looked at his aunt for a minute or two. Then he went up into the loft above the room where we were; he brought a small paper parcel down; bade us keep on our watch yet a little time. First one and then the other of us went home to get some food. It was a bitter black frost; no one was out, who could stop indoors; and those who were out cared not to stop to speak. Towards afternoon the air darkened, and a great snow-storm came on. We durst not be left, only one alone; yet at the cottage where Miss Phillis had lived there was neither fire nor fuel. So we sate and shivered and shook till morning. The Squire never came that night nor all next day.

“What must we do?” asked Ethelinda, broken down entirely. “I shall die if I stop here another night. We must tell the neighbours and get help for the watch.”

“So we must,” said I, very low and grieved. I went out

and told the news at the nearest house, taking care, you may be sure, never to speak of the hunger and cold Miss Phillis must have endured in silence. It was bad enough to have them come in, and make their remarks on the poor bits of furniture; for no one had known their bitter straits even as much as Ethelinda and me, and we had been shocked at the bareness of the place. I did hear that one or two of the more ill-conditioned had said, it was not for nothing we had kept the death to ourselves for two nights; that to judge from the lace on her cap there must have been some pretty pickings. Ethelinda would have contradicted this, but I bade her let it alone; it would save the memory of the proud Mortons from the shame that poverty is thought to be; and as for us, why we could live it down. But on the whole people came forward kindly; money was not wanting to bury her well, if not grandly as became her birth; and many a one was bidden to the funeral who might have looked after her a little more in her life-time. Among others was Squire Hargreaves from Bothwick Hall over the Moors. He was some kind of far-away cousin to the Mortons. So when he came he was asked to go chief mourner in Squire Morton's strange absence, which I should have wondered at the more if I had not thought him almost crazy when I watched his ways through the shutter that night. Squire Hargreaves started when they paid him the compliment of asking him to take the head of the coffin.

"Where is her nephew?" asked he.

"No one has seen him since eight o'clock last Thursday morning."

"But I saw him at noon on Thursday," said Squire Hargreaves with a round oath. "He came over the moors to tell me of his aunt's death; and to ask me to give him a little money to bury her, on the pledge of his gold shirt-buttons. He said I was a cousin, and could pity a gentleman in such sore need. That the buttons were his mother's first gift to him; and that I was to keep them safe, for some day he would make his fortune and come back to redeem them. He had not known his aunt was so ill, or he would have parted with these buttons sooner,

though he held them as more precious than he could tell me. I gave him money; but I could not find in my heart to take the buttons. He bade me not tell of all this; but when a man is missing it is my duty to give all the clue I can."

And so their poverty was blazoned abroad! But folk forgot it all in the search for the Squire on the moor side. Two days they searched in vain; the third, upwards of a hundred men turned out hand-in-hand, step to step, to leave no foot of ground unsearched. They found him stark and stiff, with Squire Hargreaves' money, and his mother's gold buttons, safe in his waistcoat pocket.

And we laid him down by the side of his poor Aunt Phillis.

After the Squire, John Marmaduke Morton, had been found dead in that sad way, on the dreary moors, the creditors seemed to lose all hold on the property; which indeed, during the seven years they had had it, they had drained as dry as a sucked orange. But for a long time no one seemed to know who rightly was the owner of Morton Hall and lands. The old house fell out of repair; the chimneys were full of starlings' nests; the flags in the terrace in front were hidden by the long grass; the panes in the windows were broken, no one knew how or why, for the children of the village got up a tale that the house was haunted. Ethelinda, and I went sometimes in the summer mornings, and gathered some of the roses that were being strangled by the bind-weed that spread over all; and we used to try and weed the old flower-garden a little; but we were no longer young, and the stooping made our backs ache. Still we always felt happier, if we cleared but ever such a little space. Yet we did not go there willingly in the afternoons, and left the garden always long before the first slight shade of dusk.

We did not choose to ask the common people — many of them were weavers for the Drumble manufacturers, and no longer decent hedgers, and ditchers — we did not choose to ask them, I say, who was squire now, or where he lived. But one day, a great London lawyer came to the Morton Arms, and made a pretty stir. He came on behalf of a General Morton, who was squire now, though he was far away in India. He had

been written to, and they had proved him heir, though he was a very distant cousin; farther back than Sir John, I think. And now he had sent word they were to take money of his that was in England, and put the house in thorough repair: for that three maiden sisters of his, who lived in some town in the north, would come and live at Morton Hall till his return. So the lawyer sent for a Drumble builder, and gave him directions. We thought it would have been prettier if he had hired John Cobb, the Morton builder, and joiner, he that had made the Squire's coffin, and the Squire's father's before that. Instead, came a troop of Drumble men, knocking, and tumbling about in the Hall, and making their jests up and down all those stately rooms. Ethelinda, and I never went near the place till they were gone, bag, and baggage. And then what a change! the old casement windows, with their heavy leaded panes half overgrown with vines and roses, were taken away, and great staring sash windows were in their stead. New grates inside; all modern, new-fangled, and smoking, instead of the brass dogs which held the mighty logs of wood in the old Squire's time. The little square Turkey carpet under the dining table, which had served Miss Phillis, was not good enough for these new Mortons; the dining-room was all carpeted over. We peeped into the old dining-parlour; that parlour where the dinner for the Puritan preachers had been laid out; the flag parlour as it had been called of late years. But it had a damp earthy smell, and was used as a lumber-room. We shut the door quicker than we had opened it. We came away disappointed. The Hall was no longer like our own honoured Morton Hall.

"After all, these three ladies are Mortons," said Ethelinda to me. "We must not forget that: we must go and pay our duty to them as soon as they have appeared in church."

Accordingly we went. But we had heard, and seen a little of them before we paid our respects at the Hall. Their maid had been down in the village; their maid as she was called now; but a maid-of-all-work she had been until now, as she very soon let out when we questioned her. However, we were never

proud; and she was a good honest farmer's daughter out of Northumberland. What work she did make with the Queen's English! The folk in Lancashire are said to speak broad; but I could always understand our own kindly tongue, whereas when Mrs. Turner told me her name, both Ethelinda and I could have sworn she said Donagh, and were afraid she was an Irish-woman. Her ladies were what you may call past the bloom of youth; Miss Sophronia — Miss Morton, properly — was just sixty; Miss Annabella, three years younger; and Miss Dorothy (or Baby, as they called her, when they were by themselves), was two years younger still. Mrs. Turner was very confidential to us, partly because I doubt not she had heard of our old connection with the family, and partly because she was an arrant talker, and was glad of anybody who would listen to her. So we heard the very first week how each of the ladies had wished for the east bed-room; that which faced the north-east; which no one slept in in the old Squire's days; but there were two steps leading up into it, and said Miss Sophronia, she would never let a younger sister have a room more elevated than she had herself. She was the eldest, and she had a right to the steps. So she bolted herself in for two days while she unpacked her clothes, and then came out looking like a hen that has laid an egg, and defies any one to take that honour from her.

But her sisters were very deferential to her in general; that must be said. They never had more than two black feathers in their bonnets; while she had always three. Mrs. Turner said that once, when they thought Miss Annabella had been going to have an offer of marriage made her, Miss Sophronia had not objected to her wearing three that winter; but when it all ended in smoke, Miss Annabella had to pluck it out as became a younger sister. Poor Miss Annabella! she had been a beauty (Mrs. Turner said), and great things had been expected of her. Her brother, the General, and her mother had both spoilt her, rather than cross her unnecessarily, and so spoil her good looks; which old Mrs. Morton had always expected would make the fortune of the family. Her sisters were angry with her for not having married some great rich gentleman; though, as she used

to say to Mrs. Turner, how could she help it. She was willing enough, but no rich gentleman came to ask her. We agreed that it really was not her fault; but her sisters thought it was: and now that she had lost her beauty, they were always casting it up what they would have done if they had had her gifts. There were some Miss Burrells they had heard of, each of whom had married a lord; and these Miss Burrells had not been such great beauties. So Miss Sophronia used to work the question by the rule of three, and put it in this way — If Miss Burrell, with a tolerable pair of eyes, a snub nose, and a wide mouth, married a baron, what rank of peer ought our pretty Annabella to have espoused? And the worst was, Miss Annabella — who had never had any ambition — wanted to have married a poor curate in her youth; but was pulled up by her mother and sisters, reminding her of the duty she owed to her family. Miss Dorothy had done her best — Miss Morton always praised her for it. With not half the good looks of Miss Annabella, she had danced with an honourable at Harrogate three times running; and, even now, she persevered in trying; which was more than could be said of Miss Annabella, who was very broken-spirited.

I do believe Mrs. Turner told us all this before we had ever seen the ladies. We had let them know, through Mrs. Turner, of our wish to pay them our respects; so we ventured to go up to the front door, and rap modestly. We had reasoned about it before, and agreed that if we were going in our every-day clothes, to offer a little present of eggs, or to call on Mrs. Turner (as she had asked us to do), the back door would have been the appropriate entrance for us. But going, however humbly, to pay our respects and offer our reverential welcome to the Miss Mortons, we took rank as their visitors, and should go to the front door. We were shown up the wide stairs, along the gallery, up two steps, into Miss Sophronia's room. She put away some papers hastily as we came in. We heard afterwards that she was writing a book, to be called "The Female Chesterfield, or Letters from a Lady of Quality to her niece." And the little niece sate there in a high chair, with a flat board tied to her back, and her feet in stocks on the rail of the chair, so that she

had nothing to do but listen to her aunt's letters; which were read aloud to her as they were written, in order to mark their effect on her manners. I was not sure whether Miss Sophronia liked our interruption; but I know little Miss Cordelia Mannisty did.

"Is the young lady crooked?" asked Ethelinda, during a pause in our conversation. I had noticed that my sister's eyes would rest on the child; although by an effort she sometimes succeeded in looking at something else occasionally.

"No! indeed, ma'am," said Miss Morton. "But she was born in India, and her backbone has never properly hardened. Besides I and my two sisters each take charge of her for a week; and, their systems of education—I might say non-education—differ so totally and entirely from my ideas, that when Miss Mannisty comes to me, I consider myself fortunate if I can undo the — hem! — that has been done during a fortnight's absence. Cordelia, my dear, repeat to these good ladies the geography lesson you learnt this morning."

Poor little Miss Mannisty began to tell us a great deal about some river in Yorkshire of which we had never heard, though I dare say we ought to, and then a great deal more about the towns that it passed by, and what they were famous for; and all I can remember — indeed could understand at the time — was that Pomfret was famous for Pomfret cakes, which I knew before. But Ethelinda gasped for breath before it was done, she was so nearly choked up with astonishment; and when it was ended, she said, "Pretty dear! it's wonderful!" Miss Morton looked a little displeased, and replied, "Not at all. Good little girls can learn any thing they choose, even French verbs. Yes, Cordelia, they can. And to be good is better than to be pretty. We don't think about looks here. You may get down, child, and go into the garden, and take care you put your bonnet on, or you'll be all over freckles." We got up to take leave at the same time, and followed the little girl out of the room. Ethelinda fumbled in her pocket.

"Here's sixpence, my dear, for you. Nay, I am sure you may take it from an old woman like me, to whom you've told

over more geography than I ever thought there was out of the Bible." For Ethelinda always maintained that the long chapters in the Bible which were all names, were geography; and though I knew well enough they were not, yet I had forgotten what the right word was, so I let her alone; for one hard word did as well as another. Little Miss looked as if she was not sure if she might take it; but I suppose we had two kindly old faces, for at last the smile came into her eyes — not to her mouth — she had lived too much with grave and quiet people for that; and looking wistfully at us, she said:

"Thank you. But won't you go and see Aunt Annabella?" We said we should like to pay our respects to both her other aunts if we might take that liberty; and perhaps she would show us the way. But, at the door of a room, she stopped short, and said sorrowfully, "I mayn't go in; it is not my week for being with Aunt Annabella;" and then she went slowly and heavily towards the garden-door.

"That child is cowed by somebody," said I to Ethelinda.

"But she knows a deal of geography" — Ethelinda's speech was curt short by the opening of the door in answer to our knock. The once beautiful Miss Annabella Morton stood before us, and bade us enter. She was dressed in white, with a turned up velvet hat, and two or three short drooping black feathers in it. I should not like to say she rouged, but she had a very pretty colour in her cheeks; that much can do neither good nor harm. At first she looked so unlike anybody I had ever seen, that I wondered what the child could have found to like in her; for like her she did, that was very clear. But, when Miss Annabella spoke, I came under the charm. Her voice was very sweet and plaintive, and suited well with the kind of things she said; all about charms of nature, and tears, and grief, and such sort of talk, which reminded me rather of poetry — very pretty to listen to; though I never could understand it as well as plain comfortable prose. Still I hardly know why I liked Miss Annabella. I think I was sorry for her; though, whether I should have been if she had not put it in my head, I don't know. The room looked very comfortable; a spinnet in a

corner to amuse herself with, and a good sofa to lie down upon. By-and-by, we got her to talk of her little niece, and she too had her system of education. She said she hoped to develop the sensibilities, and to cultivate the tastes. While with her, her darling niece read works of imagination, and acquired all that Miss Annabella could impart of the fine arts. We neither of us quite knew what she was hinting at at the time; but afterwards, by dint of questioning little Miss, and using our own eyes and ears, we found that she read aloud to her aunt while she lay on the sofa; *Santo Sebastiano*, or the *Young Protector*, was what they were deep in at this time; and, as it was in five volumes and the heroine spoke broken English — which required to be read twice over to make it intelligible — it lasted them a long time. She also learned to play on the spinnet; not much — for I never heard above two tunes; one of which was *God save the King*, and the other was not. But I fancy the poor child was lectured by one aunt, and frightened by the other's sharp ways and numerous fancies. She might well be fond of her gentle, pensive (Miss Annabella told me she was pensive, so I know I am right in calling her so) aunt with her soft voice, and her never ending novels, and the sweet scents, that hovered about the sleepy room.

No one tempted us towards Miss Dorothy's apartment when we left Miss Annabella; so we did not see the youngest Miss Morton this first day. We had each of us treasured up many little mysteries to be explained by our dictionary, Mrs. Turner.

“Who is little Miss Mannisty?” we asked in one breath, when we saw our friend from the Hall. And then we learnt that there had been a fourth — a younger Miss Morton, who was no beauty, and no wit, and no anything; so Miss Sophronia, her eldest sister, had allowed her to marry a Mr. Mannisty, and ever after spoke of her as “my poor sister Jane.” She and her husband had gone out to India; and both had died there; and the General had made it a sort of condition with his sisters that they should take charge of the child, or else none of them liked children except Miss Annabella.

"Miss Annabella likes children!" said I. "Then that's the reason children like her."

"I can't say she likes children; for we never have any in our house but Miss Cordelia; but her she does like dearly."

"Poor little Miss!" said Ethelinda, "does she never get a game of play with other little girls?" And I am sure from that time Ethelinda considered her in a diseased state from this very circumstance, and that her knowledge of geography was one of the symptoms of the disorder; for she used often to say, "I wish she did not know so much geography! I'm sure it is not quite right."

Whether or not her geography was right I don't know; but the child pined for companions. A very few days after we had called — and yet long enough to have passed her into Miss Annabella's week — I saw Miss Cordelia in a corner of the church green, playing with awkward humility, along with some of the rough village girls, who were as expert at the game as she was unapt and slow. I hesitated a little, and at last I called to her.

"How do you, my dear?" I said. "How come you here, so far from home?"

She reddened, and then looked up at me with her large serious eyes.

"Aunt Annabel sent me into the wood to meditate — and — and — it was very dull — and I heard these little girls playing and laughing — and I had my sixpence with me, and — it was not wrong, was it, ma'am? — I came to them and told one of them I would give it to her if she would ask the others to let me play with them."

"But my dear, they are — some of them — very rough little children, and not fit companions for a Morton."

"But, I am a Mannisty, ma'am!" she pleaded, with so much entreaty in her ways that, if I had not known what naughty bad girls some of them were, I could not have resisted her longing for companions of her own age. As it was, I was angry with them for having taken her sixpence; but, when she had told me

which it was, and saw that I was going to reclaim it, she clung to me, and said:—

“Oh! don’t, ma’am — you must not. I gave it to her quite of my own self.”

So I turned away; for there was truth in what the child said. But to this day I have never told Ethelinda what became of her sixpence. I took Miss Cordelia home with me while I changed my dress to be fit to take her back to the Hall. And on the way, to make up for her disappointment, I began talking of my dear Miss Phillis and her bright pretty youth. I had never named her name since her death to any one but Ethelinda — and that only on Sundays and quiet times. And I could not have spoken of her to a grown-up person; but somehow to Miss Cordelia it came out quite natural. Not of her latter days, of course; but of her pony, and her little black King Charles’s dogs, and all the living creatures that were glad in her presence when first I knew her. And nothing would satisfy the child but I must go into the Hall garden and show her where Miss Phillis’s garden had been. We were deep in our talk, and she was stooping down to clear the plot from weeds, when I heard a sharp voice cry out, “Cordelia! Cordelia! Dirtying your frock with kneeling on the wet grass! It is not my week: but I shall tell your Aunt Annabella of you.”

And the window was shut down with a jerk. It was Miss Dorothy. And I felt almost as guilty as poor little Miss Cordelia: for I had heard from Mrs. Turner that we had given great offence to Miss Dorothy by not going to call on her in her room that day on which we had paid our respects to her sisters; and I had a sort of an idea that seeing Miss Cordelia with me was almost as much of a fault as the kneeling down on the wet grass. So I thought I would take the bull by the horns.

“Will you take me to your Aunt Dorothy, my dear?” said I.

The little girl had no longing to go into her aunt Dorothy’s room, as she had so evidently had at Miss Annabella’s door. On the contrary, she pointed it out to me at a safe distance, and then went away in the measured step she was taught to use

in that house; where such things as running, going upstairs two steps at a time, or jumping down three, were considered undignified and vulgar. Miss Dorothy's room was the least prepossessing of any. Somehow it had a north-east look about it, though it did face direct south; and, as for Miss Dorothy herself, she was more like a "Cousin Betty" than anything else; if you know what a Cousin Betty is, and perhaps it is too old-fashioned a word to be understood by any one who has learnt the foreign languages: but when I was a girl, there used to be poor crazy women rambling about the country, one or two in a district. They never did any harm that I know of; they might have been born idiots, poor creatures! or crossed in love, who knows? But they roamed the country, and were well known at the farm-houses; where they often got food and shelter for as long a time as their restless minds would allow them to stay in any one place; and the farmer's wife would, maybe, rummage up a ribbon, or a feather, or a smart old breadth of silk, to please the harmless vanity of these poor crazy women; and they would go about so bedizened sometimes that, as we called them always "Cousin Betty," we made it into a kind of proverb for any one dressed in a fly-away showy style, and said they were like a Cousin Betty. So now you know what I mean that Miss Dorothy was like. Her dress was white, like Miss Anna-bella's; but, instead of the black velvet hat her sister wore, she had on, even in the house, a small black silk bonnet. This sounds as if it should be less like a Cousin Betty than a hat; but wait till I tell you how it was lined — with strips of red silk, broad near the face, narrow near the brim; for all the world like the rays of the rising sun, as they are painted on the public-house sign. And her face was like the sun; as round as an apple; and with rouge on, without any doubt: indeed, she told me once, a lady was not dressed unless she hat put her rouge on. Mrs. Turner told us she studied reflections a great deal; not that she was a thinking woman in general, I should say; and that this rayed lining was the fruit of her study. She had her hair pulled together, so that her forehead was quite covered with it; and I won't deny that I rather wished myself at home,

as I stood facing her in the door-way. She pretended she did not know who I was, and made me tell all about myself; and then it turned out she knew all about me, and she hoped I had recovered from my fatigue the other day.

“What fatigue?” asked I, immovably. Oh! she had understood I was very much tired after visiting her sisters; otherwise, of course, I should not have felt it too much to come on to her room. She kept hinting at me in so many ways, that I could have asked her gladly to slap my face and have done with it, only I wanted to make Miss Cordelia’s peace with her for kneeling down and dirtying her frock. I did say what I could to make things straight; but I don’t know if I did any good. Mrs. Turner told me how suspicious and jealous she was of every body, and of Miss Annabella in particular, who had been set over her in her youth because of her beauty; but, since it had faded, Miss Morton and Miss Dorothy had never ceased pecking at her; and Miss Dorothy worst of all. If it had not been for little Miss Cordelia’s love, Miss Annabella might have wished to die; she did often wish she had had the smallpox as a baby. Miss Morton was stately and cold to her, as one who had not done her duty to her family, and was put in the corner for her bad behaviour. Miss Dorothy was continually talking at her, and particularly dwelling on the fact of her being the older sister. Now she was but two years older; and was still so pretty and gentle looking, that I should have forgotten it continually but for Miss Dorothy.

The rules that were made for Miss Cordelia! She was to eat her meals standing, that was one thing! Another was, that she was to drink two cups of cold water before she had any pudding; and it just made the child loathe cold water. Then there were ever so many words she might not use; each aunt had her own set of words which were ungenteel or improper for some reason or another. Miss Dorothy would never let her say “red;” it was always to be pink, or crimson, or scarlet. Miss Cordelia used at one time to come to us, and tell us she had a “pain at her chest” so often, that Ethelinda and I began to be uneasy, and questioned Mrs. Turner to know if her mother had died of consump-

tion; and many a good pot of currant jelly have I given her, and only made her pain at the chest worse; for—would you believe it?—Miss Morton told her never to say she had got a stomach-ache, for that it was not proper to say so. I had heard it called by a worse name still in my youth, and so had Ethelinda; and we sat and wondered to ourselves how it was that some kinds of pain were genteel and others were not. I said that old families, like the Mortons, generally thought it showed good blood to have their complaints as high in the body as they could—brain-fevers and headaches had a better sound, and did perhaps belong more to the aristocracy. I thought I had got the right view in saying this, when Ethelinda would put in that she had often heard of Lord Toffey having the gout and being lame, and that nonplussed me. If there is one thing I do dislike more than another, it is a person saying something on the other side when I am trying to make up my mind — how can I reason if I am to be disturbed by another person's arguments?

But though I tell all these peculiarities of the Miss Mortons, they were good women in the main: even Miss Dorothy had her times of kindness, and really did love her little niece, though she was always laying traps to catch her doing wrong. Miss Morton I got to respect, if I never liked her. They would ask us up to tea; and we would put on our best gowns; and taking the house-key in my pocket, we used to walk slowly through the village, wishing that people who had been living in our youth could have seen us now, going by invitation to drink tea with the family at the Hall—not in the housekeeper's room, but with the family, mind you. But since they began to weave in Morton, everybody seemed too busy to notice us; so we were fain to be content with reminding each other how we should never have believed it in our youth that we could have lived to this day. After tea, Miss Morton would set us to talk of the real old family, whom they had never known; and you may be sure we told of all their pomp and grandeur and stately ways; but Ethelinda and I never spoke of what was to ourselves like the memory of a sad, terrible dream. So they thought of the Squire in his coach-and-four as High Sheriff, and Madam lying in her

morning-room in her Genoa velvet wrapping-robe, all over peacock's eyes (it was a piece of velvet the Squire brought back from Italy, when he had been the grand tour), and Miss Phillis going to a ball at a great lord's house and dancing with a royal duke. The three ladies were never tired of listening to the tale of the splendour that had been going on here, while they and their mother had been starving in genteel poverty up in Northumberland; and as for Miss Cordelia, she sate on a stool at her Aunt Annabella's knee, her hand in her aunt's, and listened, open-mouthed and unnoticed, to all we could say.

One day, the child came crying to our house. It was the old story; Aunt Dorothy had been so unkind to Aunt Annabella! The little girl said she would run away to India, and tell her uncle the General, and seemed in such a paroxysm of anger, and grief, and despair, that a sudden thought came over me. I thought I would try and teach her something of the deep sorrow that lies awaiting all at some part of their lives, and of the way in which it ought to be borne, by telling her of Miss Phillis's love and endurance for her wasteful, handsome nephew. So from little, I got to more, and I told her all; the child's great eyes filling slowly with tears, which brimmed over and came rolling down her cheeks unnoticed as I spoke. I scarcely needed to make her promise not to speak about all this to any one. She said, "I could not — no! not even to Aunt Annabella." And to this day she never has named it again, not even to me; but she tried to make herself more patient, and more silently helpful in the strange household among whom she was cast.

By-and-by, Miss Morton grew pale and grey, and worn, amid all her stiffness. Mrs. Turner whispered to us that for all her stern, unmoved looks, she was ill unto death; that she had been secretly to see the great doctor at Drumble; and he had told her she must set her house in order. Not even her sisters knew this; but it preyed upon Mrs. Turner's mind and she told us. Long after this, she kept up her week of discipline with Miss Cordelia; and walked in her straight, soldier-like way about the village, scolding people for having too large families, and burning too much coal, and eating too much butter. One

morning she sent Mrs. Turner for her sisters; and, while she was away, she rummaged out an old locket made of the four Miss Mortons' hair when they were all children; and, threading the eye of the locket with a piece of brown ribbon, she tied it round Cordelia's neck, and kissing her, told her she had been a good girl, and had cured herself of stooping; that she must fear God and honour the King; and that now she might go and have a holiday. Even while the child looked at her in wonder at the unusual tenderness with which this was said, a grim spasm passed over her face, and Cordelia ran in affright to call Mrs. Turner. But when she came, and the other two sisters came, she was quite herself again. She had her sisters in her room alone when she wished them goodbye; so no one knows what she said, or how she told them (who were thinking of her as in health) that the signs of near-approaching death, which the doctor had foretold, were upon her. One thing they both agreed in saying — and it was much that Miss Dorothy agreed in anything — that she bequeathed her sitting-room up the two steps, to Miss Annabella as being next in age. Then they left her room crying, and went both together into Miss Annabella's room, sitting hand in hand, (for the first time since childhood I should think,) listening for the sound of the little hand-bell which was to be placed close by her, in case, in her agony, she required Mrs. Turner's presence. But it never rang. Noon became twilight. Miss Cordelia stole in from the garden with its long, black, green shadows, and strange eerie sounds of the night wind through the trees, and crept to the kitchen fire. At last Mrs. Turner knocked at Miss Morton's door, and hearing no reply, went in and found her cold and dead in her chair.

I suppose that sometime or other we had told them of the funeral the old Squire had; Miss Phillis's father, I mean. He had had a procession of tenantry half-a-mile long to follow him to the grave. Miss Dorothy sent for me to tell her what tenantry of her brother's could follow Miss Morton's coffin; but what with people working in mills, and land having passed away from the family, we could but muster up twenty people, men and women and all; and one or two were dirty enough to be paid for their loss of time.

Poor Miss Annabella did not wish to go into the room up two steps; nor yet dared she stay behind; for Miss Dorothy, in a kind of spite for not having had it bequeathed to her, kept telling Miss Annabella it was her duty to occupy it; that it was Miss Sophronia's dying wish, and that she should not wonder if Miss Sophronia were to haunt Miss Annabella, if she did not leave her warm room, full of ease and sweet scent, for the grim northeast chamber. We told Mrs. Turner we were afraid Miss Dorothy would lord it sadly over Miss Annabella, and she only shook her head; which, from so talkative a woman, meant a great deal. But, just as Miss Cordelia had begun to droop, the General came home, without any one knowing he was coming. Sharp and sudden was the word with him. He sent Miss Cordelia off to school; but not before she had had time to tell us that she loved her uncle dearly, in spite of his quick hasty ways. He carried his sisters off to Cheltenham; and it was astonishing how young they made themselves look before they came back again. He was always here, there, and everywhere; and very civil to us into the bargain; leaving the key of the Hall with us whenever they went from home. Miss Dorothy was afraid of him, which was a blessing, for it kept her in order; and really I was rather sorry when she died, and, as for Miss Annabella, she fretted after her till she injured her health, and Miss Cordelia had to leave school to come and keep her company. Miss Cordelia was not pretty; she had too sad and grave a look for that; but she had winning ways, and was to have her uncle's fortune some day, so I expected to hear of her being soon snapt up. But the General said her husband was to take the name of Morton; and what did my young lady do but begin to care for one of the great mill-owners at Drumble, as if there were not all the lords and commons to choose from besides? Mrs. Turner was dead; and there was no one to tell us about it; but I could see Miss Cordelia growing thinner and paler every time they came back to Morton Hall; and I longed to tell her to pluck up a spirit, and be above a cotton-spinner. One day, not half a year before the General's death, she came to see us, and told us, blushing like a rose, that her uncle had given his consent;

and so, although "he" had refused to take the name of Morton, and had wanted to marry her without a penny, and without her uncle's leave, it had all come right at last, and they were to be married at once; and their house was to be a kind of home for her Aunt Annabella, who was getting tired of being perpetually on the ramble with the General.

"Dear old friends!" said our young lady, "You must like him. I am sure you will; he is so handsome, and brave, and good. Do you know, he says a relation of his ancestors lived at Morton Hall in the time of the Commonwealth."

"His ancestors?" said Ethelinda. "Has he got ancestors? That's one good point about him, at any rate. I didn't know cotton-spinners had ancestors."

"What is his name?" asked I.

"Mr. Marmaduke Carr," said she, sounding each r with the old Northumberland burr, which was softened into a pretty pride and effort to give distinctness to each letter of the beloved name.

"Carr," said I, "Carr and Morton! Be it so! It was prophesied of old!" But she was too much absorbed in the thought of her own secret happiness to notice my poor sayings.

He was and is a good gentleman; and a real gentleman too. They never lived at Morton Hall. Just as I was writing this, Ethelinda came in with two pieces of news. Never again say I am superstitious! There is no one living in Morton that knows the tradition of Sir John Morton and Alice Carr; yet the very first part of the Hall the Drumble builder has pulled down is the old stone dining-parlour where the great dinner for the preachers mouldered away—flesh from flesh, crumb from crumb! And the street they are going to build right through the rooms through which Alice Carr was dragged in her agony of despair at her husband's loathing hatred is to be called Carr Street!

And Miss Cordelia has got a baby; a little girl; and writes in pencil two lines at the end of her husband's note, to say she means to call it Phillis.

Phillis Carr! I am glad he did not take the name of Morton. I like to keep the name of Phillis Morton in my memory very still and unspoken.

MY FRENCH MASTER.

CHAPTER I.

My father's house was in the country, seven miles away from the nearest town. He had been an officer in the navy; but, as he had met with some accident that would disable him from ever serving again, he gave up his commission, and his half-pay. He had a small private fortune, and my mother had not been penniless; so he purchased a house, and ten or twelve acres of land, and set himself up as an amateur farmer on a very small scale. My mother rejoiced over the very small scale of his operations; and when my father regretted, as he did very often, that no more land was to be purchased in the neighbourhood, I could see her setting herself a sum in her head, "If on twelve acres he manages to lose a hundred pounds a year, what would be our loss on a hundred and fifty?" But when my father was pushed hard on the subject of the money he spent in his sailor-like farming, he had one constant retreat:

"Think of the health, and the pleasure we all of us take in the cultivation of the fields around us! It is something for us to do, and to look forward to every day." And this was so true that as long as my father confined himself to these arguments, my mother left him unmolested: but to strangers he was still apt to enlarge on the returns his farm brought him in; and he had often to pull up in his statements when he caught the warning glance of my mother's eye, showing him that she was not so much absorbed in her own conversation as to be deaf to his voice. But as for the happiness that arose out of our mode of life — that was not to be calculated by tens or hundreds of pounds. There were only two of us, my sister, and myself; and my mother undertook the greater part of our education.

We helped her in her household cares during part of the morning; then came an old-fashioned routine of lessons, such as she herself had learnt when a girl: — Goldsmith's "History of England," Rollin's "Ancient History," Lindley Murray's Grammar, and plenty of sewing, and stitching.

My mother used sometimes to sigh, and wish that she could buy us a piano, and teach us what little music she knew; but many of my dear father's habits were expensive — at least for a person possessed of no larger an income than he had. Besides the quiet, and unsuspected drain of his agricultural pursuits, he was of a social turn; enjoying the dinners to which he was invited by his more affluent neighbours; and especially delighted in returning them the compliment, and giving them choice little entertainments, which would have been yet more frequent in their recurrence than they were, if it had not been for my mother's prudence. But we never were able to purchase the piano; it required a greater outlay of ready money than we ever possessed. I dare say we should have grown up ignorant of any language but our own if it had not been for my father's social habits, which led to our learning French in a very unexpected manner. He, and my mother went to dine with General Ashburton, one of the forest rangers; and there they met with an emigrant gentleman, a Monsieur de Chalabre, who had escaped in a wonderful manner, and at terrible peril to his life: and was, consequently, in our small forest-circle, a great lion, and a worthy cause of a series of dinner parties. His first entertainer, General Ashburton, had known him in France, under very different circumstances; and he was not prepared for the quiet, and dignified request made by his guest, one afternoon after M. de Chalabre had been about a fortnight in the forest, that the General would recommend him as a French teacher, if he could conscientiously do so.

To the General's remonstrances M. de Chalabre smilingly replied, by an assurance that his assumption of his new occupation could only be for a short time; that the good cause would — *must* triumph. It was before the fatal 21st of January, 1793; and then, still smiling, he strengthened his position by quoting

innumerable instances out of the classics, of heroes, and patriots, generals and commanders, who had been reduced by Fortune's frolics to adopt some occupation far below their original one. He closed his speech with informing the General that, relying upon his kindness in acting as referee, he had taken lodgings for a few months at a small farm which was in the centre of our forest circle of acquaintances. The General was too thoroughly a gentleman to say anything more than that he should be most happy to do whatever he could to forward M. de Chalabre's plans; and as my father was the first person whom he met with after this conversation, it was announced to us, on the very evening of the day on which it had taken place, that we were forthwith to learn French; and I verily believe that, if my father could have persuaded my mother to join him, we should have formed a French class of father, mother, and two head of daughters, so touched had my father been by the General's account of M. de Chalabre's present desires, as compared with the high estate from which he had fallen. Accordingly, we were installed in the dignity of his first French pupils. My father was anxious that we should have a lesson every other day, ostensibly that we might get on all the more speedily, but really that he might have a larger quarterly bill to pay; at any rate until M. de Chalabre had more of his time occupied with instruction. But my mother gently interfered and calmed her husband down into two lessons a-week, which was, she said, as much as we could manage. Those happy lessons! I remember them now, at the distance of more than fifty years. Our house was situated on the edge of the forest; our fields were, in fact, cleared out of it. It was not good land for clover; but my father would always sow one particular field with clover seed, because my mother was so fond of the fragrant scent in her evening walks, and through this a foot-path ran which led into the forest.

A quarter of a mile beyond — a walk on the soft fine springy turf, and under the long low branches of the beech-trees, and we arrived at the old red-brick farm where M. de Chalabre was lodging. Not that we went there to take our lessons; that

would have been an offence to his spirit of politeness; but as my father and mother were his nearest neighbours, there was a constant interchange of small messages and notes, which we little girls were only too happy to take to our dear M. de Chalabre. Moreover, if our lessons with my mother were ended pretty early, she would say — “ You have been good girls; now you may run to the high point in the clover field, and see if M. de Chalabre is coming; and if he is you may walk with him; but take care and give him the cleanest part of the path, for you know he does not like to dirty his boots.”

This was all very well in theory; but, like many theories, the difficulty was to put it in practice. If we slipped to the side of the path where the water lay longest, he bowed and retreated behind us to a still wetter place, leaving the clean part for us; yet when we got home his polished boots would be without a speck, while our shoes were covered with mud.

Another little ceremony which we had to get accustomed to, was his habit of taking off his hat as we approached, and walking by us holding it in his hand. To be sure, he wore a wig, delicately powdered, frizzed, and tied in a queue behind; but we had always a feeling that he would catch cold, and that he was doing us too great an honour, and that he did not know how old or rather how young we were, until one day we saw him (far away from our house) hand a countrywoman over a style with the same kind of dainty courteous politeness, lifting her basket of eggs over first; and then, taking up the silk-lined lapel of his coat, he spread it on the palm of his hand for her to rest her fingers upon; instead of which, she took his small white hand in her plump vigorous gripe, and leant her full weight upon him. He carried her basket for her as far as their roads lay together; and from that time we were less shy in receiving his courtesies, perceiving that he considered them as deference due to our sex, however old or young, or rich or poor. So, as I said, we came down from the clover-field in rather a stately manner, and through the wicket gate that opened into our garden, which was as rich in its scents of varied kinds as the clover-field had been in its one pure fragrance. My mother

would meet us here; and somehow — our life was passed as much out of doors as in-doors, both winter and summer — we seemed to have our French lessons more frequently in the garden than in the house; for there was a sort of arbour on the lawn near the drawing-room window, to which we always found it easy to carry a table and chairs, and all the rest of the lesson paraphernalia, if my mother did not prohibit a lesson al fresco.

M. de Chalabre wore, as a sort of morning costume, a coat, waistcoat, and breeches all made of a kind of coarse grey cloth, which he had bought in the neighbourhood; his three-cornered hat was brushed to a nicety, his wig sat as no one else's did. (My father's was always awry.) And the only thing wanting to his costume when he came was a flower. Sometimes I fancied he purposely omitted gathering one of the roses that clustered up the farm-house in which he lodged, in order to afford my mother the pleasure of culling her choicest carnations and roses to make him up his nosegay, or "posy," as he liked to call it; he had picked up that pretty country word, and adopted it as an especial favourite, dwelling on the first syllable with all the languid softness of an Italian accent. Many a time have Mary, and I tried to say it like him; we did so admire his way of speaking.

Once seated round the table, whether in the house or out of it, we were bound to attend to our lessons: and somehow he made us perceive that it was a part of the same chivalrous code that made him so helpful to the helpless, to enforce the slightest claim of duty to the full. No half-prepared lessons for him! The patience, and the resource with which he illustrated, and enforced every precept; the untiring gentleness with which he made our stubborn English tongues pronounce, and mispronounce, and repronounce certain words; above all, the sweetness of temper which never varied, were such as I have never seen equalled. If we wondered at these qualities when we were children, how much greater has been our surprise at their existence since we have been grown up, and have learnt

that, until his emigration, he was a man of rapid and impulsive action, with the imperfect education implied in the circumstance, that at fifteen he was a sous-lieutenant in the Queen's regiment, and must, consequently, have had to apply himself hard, and conscientiously to master the language which he had in after-life to teach.

Twice we had holidays to suit his sad convenience. Holidays with us were not at Christmas, and Midsummer, Easter and Michaelmas. If my mother was unusually busy, we had what we called a holiday; though, in reality, it involved harder work than our regular lessons; but we fetched, and carried, and ran errands, and became rosy, and dusty, and sang merry songs in the gaiety of our hearts. If the day was remarkably fine, my dear father—whose spirits were rather apt to vary with the weather — would come bursting in with his bright, kind, bronzed face, and carry the day by storm with my mother. "It was a shame to coop such young things up in a house," he would say, "when every other young animal was frolicking in the air and sunshine. Grammar! — what was that but the art of arranging words? — and he never knew a woman but could do that fast enough. Geography! — he would undertake to teach us more geography in one winter evening, telling us of the countries where he had been, with just a map before him, than we could learn in ten years with that stupid book, all full of hard words. As for the French — why that must be learnt, for he should not like M. de Chalabre to think we slighted the lessons he took so much pains to give us; but surely we could get up the earlier to learn our French." We promised by acclamation; and my mother — sometimes smilingly, sometimes reluctantly — was always compelled to yield. And these were the usual occasions for our holidays. But twice we had a fortnight's entire cessation of French lessons; once in January, and once in October. Nor did we even see our dear French master during those periods. We went several times to the top of the clover-field, to search the dark green outskirts of the forest with our busy eyes; and if we could have seen his figure in that shade, I am sure we should have scampered to

him, forgetful of the prohibition which made the forest forbidden ground. But we did not see him.

It was the fashion in those days to keep children much less informed than they are now on the subjects which interest their parents. A sort of hieroglyphic or cypher talk was used in order to conceal the meaning of much that was said if children were present. My mother was a proficient in this way of talking, and took, we fancied, a certain pleasure in perplexing my father by inventing a new cypher, as it were, every day. For instance, for some time, I was called Martia, because I was very tall of my age; and just as my father had begun to understand the name — and, it must be owned, a good while after I had learnt to prick up my ears whenever Martia was named — my mother suddenly changed me into the “buttress,” from the habit I had acquired of leaning my languid length against a wall. I saw my father’s perplexity about this “buttress” for some days, and could have helped him out of it, but I durst not. And so, when the unfortunate Louis the Sixteenth was executed, the news was too terrible to be put into plain English, and too terrible also to be made known to us children, nor could we at once find the clue to the cypher in which it was spoken about. We heard about “the Iris being blown down;” and saw my father’s honest loyal excitement about it, and the quiet reserve which always betokened some secret grief on my mother’s part.

We had no French lessons; and somehow the poor, battered, storm-torn Iris was to blame for this. It was many weeks after this before we knew the full reason of M. de Chalabre’s deep depression when he again came amongst us: why he shook his head when my mother timidly offered him some snowdrops on that first morning on which we began lessons again: why he wore the deep mourning of that day, when all of the dress that could be black was black, and the white muslin frills and ruffles were unstarched and limp, as if to bespeak the very abandonment of grief. We knew well enough the meaning of the next hieroglyphic announcement — “The wicked cruel boys had broken off the White Lily’s head!” That beautiful queen,

whose portrait once had been shown to us, with her blue eyes, and her fair resolute look, her profusion of lightly-powdered hair, her white neck adorned with strings of pearls. We could have cried, if we had dared, when we heard the transparent mysterious words. We did cry at night, sitting up in bed, with our arms round each other's necks, and vowing, in our weak, passionate, childish way, that if we lived long enough, that lady's death avenged should be. No one who cannot remember that time can tell the shudder of horror that thrilled through the country at hearing of this last execution. At the moment, there was no time for any consideration of the silent horrors endured for centuries by the people who at length rose in their madness against their rulers. This last blow changed our dear M. de Chalabre. I never saw him again in quite the same gaiety of heart as before this time. There seemed to be tears very close behind his smiles for ever after. My father went to see him when he had been about a week absent from us — no reason given, for did not we, did not every one know the horror the sun had looked upon! As soon as my father had gone, my mother gave it in charge to us to make the dressing-room belonging to our guest-chamber as much like a sitting-room as possible. My father hoped to bring back M. de Chalabre for a visit to us; but he would probably like to be a good deal alone; and we might move any article of furniture we liked, if we only thought it would make him comfortable.

I believe General Ashburton had been on a somewhat similar errand to my father's before; but he had failed. My father gained his point, as I afterwards learnt, in a very unconscious and characteristic manner. He had urged his invitation on M. de Chalabre, and received such a decided negative that he was hopeless, and quitted the subject. Then M. de Chalabre began to relieve his heart by telling him all the details; my father held his breath to listen — at last, his honest heart could contain itself no longer, and the tears ran down his face. His unaffected sympathy touched M. de Chalabre inexpressibly; and in an hour after we saw our dear French master coming down the clover-field slope, leaning on my father's arm which he had

involuntarily offered as a support to one in trouble — although he was slightly lame, and ten or fifteen years older than M. de Chalabre.

For a year after that time M. de Chalabre never wore any flowers; and after that, to the day of his death, no gay or coloured rose or carnation could tempt him. We secretly observed his taste and always took care to bring him white flowers for his posy. I noticed, too, that on his left arm, under his coat sleeve (sleeves were made very open then), he always wore a small band of black crape. He lived to be eighty-one, but he had the black crape band on when he died.

M. de Chalabre was a favourite in all the forest circle. He was a great acquisition to the sociable dinner parties that were perpetually going on; and though some of the families piqued themselves on being aristocratic, and turned up their noses at any one who had been engaged in trade, however largely, M. de Chalabre, in right of his good blood, his loyalty, his daring “preux chevalier” actions, was ever an honoured guest. He took his poverty, and the simple habits it enforced, so naturally and gaily, as a mere trifling accident of his life, about which neither concealment nor shame could be necessary, that the very servants — often so much more pseudo-aristocratic than their masters — loved and respected the French gentleman, who, perhaps, came to teach in the mornings, and in the evenings made his appearance dressed with dainty neatness as a dinner guest. He came lightly prancing through the forest mire; and, in our little hall, at any rate, he would pull out a neat minute case containing a blacking-brush and blacking, and re-polish his boots, speaking gaily, in his broken English, to the footman all the time. That blacking case was his own making; he had a genius for using his fingers. After our lessons were over, he relaxed into the familiar house friend, the merry play-fellow. We lived far from any carpenter or joiner; if a lock was out of order M. de Chalabre made it right for us. If any box was wanted, his ingenious fingers had made it before our lesson day. He turned silk winders for my mother, made a

set of chessmen for my father, carved an elegant watch-case out of a rough beef-bone — dressed up little cork dolls for us — in short, as he said, his heart would have been broken but for his joiner's tools. Nor were his ingenious gifts employed for us alone. The farmer's wife where he lodged had numerous contrivances in her house which he had made. One particularly which I remember was a paste-board, made after a French pattern, which would not slip about on a dresser, as he had observed her English paste-board do. Susan, the farmer's ruddy daughter, had her work-box too, to show us; and her cousin-lover had a wonderful stick, with an extraordinary demon head carved upon it; — all by M. de Chalabre. Farmer, farmer's wife, Susan, Robert, and all were full of his praises.

We grew from children into girls — from girls into women; and still M. de Chalabre taught on in the forest; still he was beloved and honoured; still no dinner-party within five miles was thought complete without him, and ten miles' distance strove to offer him a bed sooner than miss his company. The pretty merry Susan of sixteen had been jilted by the faithless Robert; and was now a comely demure damsel of thirty-one or two; still waiting upon M. de Chalabre, and still constant in respectfully singing his praises. My own poor mother was dead; my sister was engaged to be married to a young lieutenant, who was with his ship in the Mediterranean. My father was as youthful as ever in heart, and indeed in many of his ways; only his hair was quite white, and the old lameness was more frequently troublesome than it had been. An uncle of his had left him a considerable fortune, so he farmed away to his heart's content, and lost an annual sum of money with the best grace and the lightest heart in the world. There were not even the gentle reproaches of my mother's eyes, to be dreaded now.

Things were in this state when the peace of 1814 was declared. We had heard so many and such contradictory rumours that we were inclined to doubt even the "Gazette" at last, and were discussing probabilities with some vehemence,

when M. de Chalabre entered the room unannounced and breathless:

“My friends, give me joy!” he said. “The Bourbons” — he could not go on; his features, nay, his very fingers, worked with agitation, but he could not speak. My father hastened to relieve him.

“We have heard the good news (you see, girls, it is quite true this time). I do congratulate you, my dear friend. I *am* glad.” And he seized M. de Chalabre’s hand in his own hearty gripe, and brought the nervous agitation of the latter to a close by unconsciously administering a pretty severe dose of wholesome pain.

“I go to London. I go straight this afternoon to see my sovereign. My sovereign holds a court to-morrow at Grillon’s Hotel; I go to pay him my devoirs. I put on my uniform of Gardes du Corps, which have laid by these many years; a little old, a little worm-eaten; but never mind; they have been seen by Marie Antoinette, which gives them a grace for ever.” He walked about the room in a nervous, hurried way. There was something on his mind, and we signed to my father to be silent for a moment or two and let it come out. “No!” said M. de Chalabre, after a moment’s pause. “I cannot say adieu; for I shall return to say, dear friends, my adieux. I did come a poor emigrant; noble Englishmen took me for their friend, and welcomed me to their houses. Chalabre is one large mansion, and my English friends will not forsake me; they will come and see me in my own country; and, for their sakes, not an English beggar shall pass the doors of Chalabre without being warmed and clothed, and fed. I will not say adieu. I go now but for two days.”

CHAPTER II.

My father insisted upon driving M. de Chalabre in his gig to the nearest town through which the London mail passed; and, during the short time that elapsed before my father was ready, he told us something more about Chalabre. He had never spoken of his ancestral home to any of us before; we

knew little of his station in his own country. General Ashburton had met with him in Paris, in a set where a man was judged of by his wit, and talent for society, and general brilliance of character, rather than by his wealth and hereditary position. Now we learned for the first time that he was heir to considerable estates in Normandy; to an old Château Chalabre; all of which he had forfeited by his emigration, it was true, but that was under another régime.

“Ah! if my dear friend — your poor mother — were alive now, I could send her such slips of rare and splendid roses from Chalabre. Often when I did see her nursing up some poor little specimen, I longed in secret for my rose garden at Chalabre. And the orangerie! Ah! Miss Fanny, the bride must come to Chalabre who wishes for a beautiful wreath.” This was an allusion to my sister’s engagement — a fact well known to him, as the faithful family friend.

My father came back in high spirits; and began to plan that very evening how to arrange his crops for the ensuing year so as best to spare time for a visit to Château Chalabre; and, as for us, I think we believed that there was no need to delay our French journey beyond the autumn of the present year.

M. de Chalabre came back in a couple of days; a little damped, we girls fancied, though we hardly liked to speak about it to my father. However, M. de Chalabre explained it to us by saying, that he had found London more crowded and busy than he had expected: that it was smoky and dismal after leaving the country, where the trees were already coming into leaf; and, when we pressed him a little more respecting the reception at Grillon’s, he laughed at himself for having forgotten the tendency of the Count de Provence in former days to become stout, and so being dismayed at the mass of corpulence which Louis the Eighteenth presented, as he toiled up the long drawing-room of the hotel.

“But what did he say to you?” Fanny asked. “How did he receive you when you were presented?”

A flash of pain passed over his face, but it was gone directly.

“Oh! his majesty did not recognise my name. It was hardly to be expected he would; though it is a name of note in Normandy; and I have — well! that is worth nothing. The Duc de Duras reminded him of a circumstance or two, which I had almost hoped his majesty would not have forgotten; but I myself forgot the pressure of long years of exile; it was no wonder he did not remember me. He said he hoped to see me at the Tuilleries. His hopes are my laws. I go to prepare for my departure. If his majesty does not need my sword, I turn it into a ploughshare at Chalabre. Ah! my friend, I will not forget there all the agricultural science I have learned from you!”

A gift of a hundred pounds would not have pleased my father so much as this last speech. He began forthwith to inquire about the nature of the soil, &c., in a way which made our poor M. de Chalabre shrug his shoulders in despairing ignorance.

“Never mind!” said my father. “Rome was not built in a day. It was a long time before I learnt all that I know now. I was afraid I could not leave home this autumn, but I perceive you’ll need some one to advise you about laying out the ground for next year’s crops.”

So M. de Chalabre left our neighbourhood, with the full understanding that we were to pay him a visit in his Norman château in the following September; nor was he content until he had persuaded every one who had shown him kindness to promise him a visit at some appointed time. As for his old landlord at the farm, the comely dame, and buxom Susan — they, we found, were to be franked there and back, under the pretence that the French dairy-maids had no notion of cleanliness, any more than that the French farming men were judges of stock; so it was absolutely necessary to bring over some one from England to put the affairs of the Château Chalabre in order; and Farmer Dobson and his wife considered the favour quite reciprocal.

For some time we did not hear from our friend. The war had made the post between France and England very uncertain; so we were obliged to wait, and we tried to be patient; but, somehow, our autumn visit to France was silently given up; and my father gave us long expositions of the disordered state of affairs in a country which had suffered so much as France, and lectured us severely on the folly of having expected to hear so soon. We knew, all the while, that the exposition was repeated to soothe his own impatience, and that the admonition to patience was what he felt that he himself was needing.

At last the letter came. There was a brave attempt at cheerfulness in it, which nearly made me cry, more than any complaints would have done. M. de Chalabre had hoped to retain his commission as Sous-Lieutenant in the Garde du Corps — a commission signed by Louis the Sixteenth himself, in 1791. But the regiment was to be remodelled or reformed, I forget which; and M. de Chalabre assured us that his was not the only case where applicants had been refused. He had then tried for a commission in the Cent Suisses, the Gardes du Porte, the Mousquetaires, but all were full. "Was it not a glorious thing for France to have so many brave sons ready to fight on the side of honour and loyalty?" To which question Fanny replied, "that it was a shame;" and my father, after a grunt or two, comforted himself by saying, "that M. de Chalabre would have the more time to attend to his neglected estate."

That winter was full of incidents in our home. As it often happens when a family has seemed stationary, and secure from change for years, and then at last one important event happens, another is sure to follow. Fanny's lover returned, and they were married, and left us alone — my father and I. Her husband's ship was stationed in the Mediterranean, and she was to go and live at Malta, with some of his relations there. I know not if it was the agitation of parting with her, but my father was stricken down from health into confirmed invalidism, by a paralytic stroke, soon after her departure; and my interests were confined to the fluctuating reports of a sick-room. I did not care

for the foreign intelligence which was shaking Europe with an universal tremor. My hopes, my fears were centred in one frail human body — my dearly beloved, my most loving father. I kept a letter in my pocket for days from M. de Chalabre, unable to find the time to decipher his French hieroglyphics; at last I read it aloud to my poor father, rather as a test of his power of enduring interest, than because I was impatient to know what it contained. The news in it was depressing enough, as everything else seemed to be that gloomy winter. A rich manufacturer of Rouen had bought the Château Chalabre; forfeited to the nation by its former possessor's emigration. His son, M. du Fay, was well-affected towards Louis the Eighteenth — at least as long as his government was secure, and promised to be stable, so as not to affect the dyeing and selling of Turkey-red wools; and so the natural legal consequence was, that M. du Fay, Fils, was not to be disturbed in his purchased and paid-for property. My father cared to hear of this disappointment to our poor friend — cared just for one day, and forgot all about it the next. Then came the return from Elba — the hurrying events of that spring — the battle of Waterloo; and to my poor father, in his second childhood, the choice of a daily pudding was far more important than all.

One Sunday, in that August of 1815, I went to church. It was many weeks since I had been able to leave my father for so long a time before. Since I had been last there to worship, it seemed as if my youth had passed away; gone without a warning; leaving no trace behind. After service, I went through the long grass to the unfrequented part of the churchyard where my dear mother lay buried. A garland of brilliant yellow immortelles lay on her grave; and the unwonted offering took me by surprise. I knew of the foreign custom, although I had never seen the kind of wreath before. I took it up, and read one word in the black floral letters; it was simply "Adieu." I knew, from the first moment I saw it, that M. de Chalabre must have returned to England. Such a token of regard was like him, and could spring from no one else. But I wondered a little that we had never heard or seen anything of him; nothing, in fact,

since Lady Ashburton had told me that her husband had met with him in Belgium, hurrying to offer himself as a volunteer to one of the eleven generals appointed by the Duc de Feltre to receive such applications. General Ashburton himself had since this died at Brussels, in consequence of wounds received at Waterloo. As the recollection of all these circumstances gathered in my mind, I found I was drawing near the field-path which led out of the direct road home, to farmer Dobson's; and thither I suddenly determined to go, and hear if they had learnt anything respecting their former lodger. As I went up the garden-walk leading to the house, I caught M. de Chalabre's eye; he was gazing abstractedly out of the window of what used to be his sitting-room. In an instant he had joined me in the garden. If my youth had flown, his youth and middle-age as well had vanished altogether. He looked older by at least twenty years than when he had left us twelve months ago. How much of this was owing to the change in the arrangement of his dress, I cannot tell. He had formerly been remarkably dainty in all these things; now he was careless, even to the verge of slovenliness. He asked after my sister, after my father, in a manner which evinced the deepest, most respectful, interest; but, somehow, it appeared to me as if he hurried question after question rather to stop any inquiries which I, in my turn, might wish to make.

“I return here to my duties; to my only duties. The good God has not seen me fit to undertake any higher. Henceforth I am the faithful French teacher; the diligent, punctual French teacher: nothing more. But I do hope to teach the French language as becomes a gentleman and a Christian; to do my best. Henceforth the grammar and the syntax are my estate, my coat of arms.” He said this with a proud humility which prevented any reply. I could only change the subject, and urge him to come and see my poor sick father. He replied:

“To visit the sick, that is my duty as well as my pleasure. For the mere society — I renounce all that. That is now beyond my position, to which I accommodate myself with all my strength.”

Accordingly, when he came to spend an hour with my father, he brought a small bundle of printed papers, announcing the terms on which M. Chalabre (the “de” was dropped now and for evermore) was desirous of teaching French, and a little paragraph at the bottom of the page solicited the patronage of schools. Now this was a great coming-down. In former days, non-teaching at schools had been the line which marked that M. de Chalabre had taken up teaching rather as an amateur profession, than with any intention of devoting his life to it. He respectfully asked me to distribute these papers where I thought fit. I say “respectfully” advisedly; there was none of the old deferential gallantry, as offered by a gentleman to a lady, his equal in birth and fortune — instead, there was the matter-of-fact request and statement which a workman offers to his employer. Only in my father’s room, he was the former M. de Chalabre; he seemed to understand how vain would be all attempts to recount or explain the circumstances which had led him so decidedly to take a lower level in society. To my father, to the day of his death, M. de Chalabre maintained the old easy footing; assumed a gaiety which he never even pretended to feel anywhere else; listened to my father’s childish interests with a true and kindly sympathy for which I ever felt grateful, although he purposely put a deferential reserve between him and me, as a barrier to any expression of such feeling on my part.

His former lessons had been held in such high esteem by those who were privileged to receive them, that he was soon sought after on all sides. The schools of the two principal county towns put forward their claims, and considered it a favour to receive his instructions. Morning, noon, and night he was engaged: even if he had not proudly withdrawn himself from all merely society engagements, he would have had no leisure for them. His only visits were paid to my father, who looked for them with a kind of childish longing. One day, to my surprise, he asked to be allowed to speak to me for an instant alone. He stood silent for a moment, turning his hat in his hand.

“You have a right to know—you, my first pupil; next Tuesday I marry myself to Miss Susan Dobson—good, respectable woman, to whose happiness I mean to devote my life, or as much of it as is not occupied with the duties of instruction.” He looked up at me, expecting congratulations perhaps; but I was too much stunned with my surprise. The buxom, red-armed, apple-cheeked Susan who, when she blushed, blushed the colour of beet-root; who did not know a word of French; who regarded the nation (always excepting the gentleman before me) as frog-eating Mounseers, the national enemies of England! I afterwards thought, that perhaps this very ignorance constituted one of her charms. No word, nor allusion, nor expressive silence, nor regretful sympathetic sighs, could remind M. de Chalabre of the bitter past, which he was evidently striving to forget. And, most assuredly, never man had a more devoted and admiring wife than poor Susan made M. de Chalabre. She was a little awed by him, to be sure; never quite at her ease before him; but I imagine husbands do not dislike such a tribute to their Jupiter-ship. Madame Chalabre received my call, after their marriage, with a degree of sober, rustic, happy dignity, which I could not have foreseen in Susan Dobson. They had taken a small cottage on the borders of the forest; it had a garden round it, and the cow, pigs, and poultry, which were to be her charge, found their keep in the forest. She had a rough country servant to assist her in looking after them; and in what scanty leisure he had, her husband attended to the *garden* and the bees. Madame Chalabre took me over the neatly furnished cottage with evident pride. “*Moussire*,” as she called him, had done this; *Moussire* had fitted up that. *Moussire* was evidently a man of resource. In a little closet of a dressing-room belonging to *Moussire*, there hung a pencil drawing, elaborately finished to the condition of a bad pocket-book engraving. It caught my eye, and I lingered to look at it. It represented a high narrow house of considerable size, with four pepper-box turrets at each corner; and a stiff avenue formed the foreground.

“*Château Chalabre?*” said I, inquisitively.

"I never asked," my companion replied. "Moussire does not always like to be asked questions. It is the picture of some place he is very fond of, for he won't let me dust it for fear I should smear it."

M. de Chalabre's marriage did not diminish the number of his visits to my father. Until that beloved parent's death, he was faithful in doing all he could to lighten the gloom of the sick room. But a chasm, which he had opened, separated any present intercourse with him from the free unreserved friendship that had existed formerly. And yet for his sake I used to go and see his wife. I could not forget early days, nor the walks to the top of the clover-field, nor the daily posies, nor my mother's dear regard for the emigrant gentleman; nor a thousand little kindnesses which he had shown to my absent sister and myself. He did not forget either in the closed and sealed chambers of his heart. So, for his sake, I tried to become a friend to his wife; and she learned to look upon me as such. It was my employment in the sick chamber to make clothes for the little expected Chalabre baby; and its mother would fain (as she told me) have asked me to carry the little infant to the font, but that her husband somewhat austere reminded her that they ought to seek a *marraine* among those of their own station in society. But I regarded the pretty little Susan as my god-child nevertheless in my heart; and secretly pledged myself always to take an interest in her. Not two months after my father's death, a sister was born; and the human heart in M. de Chalabre subdued his pride; the child was to bear the pretty name of his French mother, although France could find no place for him, and had cast him out. That youngest little girl was called Aimée.

When my father died, Fanny and her husband urged me to leave Brookfield, and come and live with them at Valetta. The estate was left to us; but an eligible tenant offered himself; and my health, which had suffered materially during my long nursing, did render it desirable for me to seek some change to a warmer climate. So I went abroad, ostensibly for a year's residence only; but, somehow, that year has grown into a life-

time. Malta and Genoa have been my dwelling places ever since. Occasionally, it is true, I have paid visits to England, but I have never looked upon it as my home since I left it thirty years ago. During these visits I have seen the Chalabres. He had become more absorbed in his occupation than ever; had published a French grammar on some new principle, of which he presented me with a copy, taking some pains to explain how it was to be used. Madame looked plump and prosperous; the farm which was under her management had thriven; and as for the two daughters, behind their English shyness, they had a good deal of French piquancy and *esprit*. I induced them to take some walks with me, with a view of asking them some questions which should make our friendship an individual reality, not merely an hereditary feeling; but the little monkeys put me through my catechism, and asked me innumerable questions about France, which they evidently regarded as their country. "How do you know all about French habits and customs?" asked I. "Does Monsieur de — does your father talk to you much about France?"

"Sometimes, when we are alone with him — never when any one is by," answered Susan, the elder, a grave, noble-looking girl, of twenty or thereabouts. "I think he does not speak about France before my mother, for fear of hurting her."

"And I think," said little Aimée, "that he does not speak at all, when he can help it; it is only when his heart gets too full with recollections, that he is obliged to talk to us, because many of the thoughts could not be said in English."

"Then I suppose you are two famous French scholars?"

"Oh yes! Papa always speaks to us in French; it is our own language."

But with all their devotion to their father and to his country, they were most affectionate dutiful daughters to their mother. They were her companions, her comforts in the pleasant household labours; most practical, useful young women. But in a privacy not the less sacred, because it was understood rather than prescribed, they kept all the enthusiasm, all the romance of their nature for their father. They were the confidantes

of that poor exile's yearnings for France; the eager listeners for what he chose to tell them of his early days. His words wrought up Susan to make the resolution that, if ever she felt herself free from home duties and responsibilities, she would become a Sister of Charity, like Anne-Marguerite de Chalabre, her father's great-aunt, and model of woman's sanctity. As for Aimée, come what might, she never would leave her father; and that was all she was clear about in picturing her future.

Three years ago I was in Paris. An English friend of mine who lives there — English by birth, but married to a German professor, and very French in manners and ways — asked me to come to her house one evening. I was far from well, and disinclined to stir out.

“Oh, but come!” said she. “I have a good reason; really a tempting reason. Perhaps this very evening a piece of poetical justice will be done in my *salon*. A living romance! Now, can you resist?”

“What is it?” said I; for she was rather in the habit of exaggerating trifles into romances.

“A young lady is coming; not in the first youth, but still young, very pretty; daughter of a French *émigré*, whom my husband knew in Belgium, and who has lived in England ever since.”

“I beg your pardon, but what is her name?” interrupted I, roused to interest.

“De Chalabre. Do you know her?”

“Yes; I am much interested in her. I will gladly come to meet her. How long has she been in Paris? Is it Susan or Aimée?”

“Now I am not to be baulked of the pleasure of telling you my romance; my hoped-for bit of poetical justice. You must be patient, and you will have answers to all your questions.”

I sank back in my easy chair. Some of my friends are rather long-winded, and it is as well to be settled in a comfortable position before they begin to talk.

“I told you a minute ago, that my husband had become acquainted with M. de Chalabre in Belgium, in 1815. They

have kept up a correspondence ever since; not a very brisk one, it is true, for M. de Chalabre was a French master in England, and my husband a professor in Paris; but still they managed to let each other know how they were going on, and what they were doing, once, if not twice every year. For myself, I never saw M. de Chalabre."

"I know him well," said I. "I have known him all my life."

"A year ago his wife died (she was an Englishwoman); she had had a long and suffering illness; and his eldest daughter had devoted herself to her with the patient sweetness of an angel, as he told us, and I can well believe. But after her mother's death, the world, it seems, became distasteful to her: she had been inured to the half-lights, the hushed voices, the constant thought for others required in a sick room, and the noise and rough bustle of healthy people jarred upon her. So she pleaded with her father to allow her to become a Sister of Charity. She told him that he would have given a welcome to any suitor who came to offer to marry her, and bear her away from her home, and her father and sister; and now, when she was called by Religion, would he grudge to part with her? He gave his consent, if not his full approbation; and he wrote to my husband to beg me to receive her here, while we sought out a convent into which she could be received. She has been with me two months, and endeared herself to me unspeakably; she goes home next week unless" —

"But, I beg your pardon; did you not say she wished to become a Sister of Charity?"

"It is true; but she was too old to be admitted into their order. She is eight-and-twenty. It has been a grievous disappointment to her; she has borne it very patiently and meekly, but I can see how deeply she has felt it. And now for my romance. My husband had a pupil some ten years ago, a M. du Fay, a clever, scientific young man, one of the first merchants of Rouen. His grandfather purchased M. de Chalabre's ancestral estate. The present M. du Fay came on business to Paris two or three days ago, and invited my husband to a little dinner; and somehow this story of Suzette Chalabre came out, in conse-

quence of inquiries my husband was making for an escort to take her to England. M. du Fay seemed interested with the story; and asked my husband if he might pay his respects to me, some evening when Suzette should be in, — and so is coming to-night, he, and a friend of his, who was at the dinner party the other day; will you come?"

I went, more in the hope of seeing Susan Chalabre, and hearing some news about my early home, than with any expectation of "poetical justice." And in that I was right; and yet I was wrong. Susan Chalabre was a grave, gentle woman, of an enthusiastic and devoted appearance, not unlike that portrait of his daughter which arrests every eye in Ary Scheffer's sacred pictures. She was silent and sad; her cherished plan of life was uprooted. She talked to me a little in a soft and friendly manner, answering any questions I asked; but, as for the gentlemen, her indifference and reserve made it impossible for them to enter into any conversation with her; and the meeting was indisputably "flat."

"Oh! my romance! my poetical justice! Before the evening was half over, I would have given up all my castles in the air for one well-sustained conversation of ten minutes long. Now don't laugh at me, for I can't bear it to-night." Such was my friend's parting speech. I did not see her again for two days. The third she came in glowing with excitement.

"You may congratulate me after all; if it was not poetical justice, it is prosaic justice; and, except for the empty romance, that is a better thing!"

"What do you mean?" said I. "Surely M. du Fay has not proposed for Susan?"

"No! but that charming M. de Frez, his friend, has; that is to say, not proposed but spoken; no, not spoken, but it seems he asked M. du Fay — whose confidant he was — if he was intending to proceed in his idea of marrying Suzette; and on hearing that he was not, M. de Frez said that he should come to us, and ask us to put him in the way of prosecuting the acquaintance, for that he had been charmed with her; looks, voice, silence, he admires them all; and we have arranged that

he is to be the escort to England; he has business there, he says; and as for Suzette (she knows nothing of all this, of course, for who dared tell her?), all her anxiety is to return home, and the first person travelling to England will satisfy her, if it does us. And, after all, M. de Frez lives within five leagues of the Château Chalabre, or she can go and see the old place whenever she will."

When I went to bid Susan good bye, she looked as unconscious and dignified as ever. No idea of a lover had ever crossed her mind. She considered M. de Frez as a kind of necessary incumbrance for the journey. I had not much hopes for him; and yet he was an agreeable man enough, and my friends told me that his character stood firm and high.

In three months, I was settled for the winter in Rome. In four, I heard that the marriage of Susan Chalabre had taken place. What were the intermediate steps between the cold, civil indifference with which I had last seen her regarding her travelling companion, and the full love with which such a woman as Suzette Chalabre must love a man before she could call him husband, I never learnt. I wrote to my old French master to congratulate him, as I believed I honestly might, on his daughter's marriage. It was some months before I received his answer. It was:—

"Dear friend, dear old pupil, dear child of the beloved dead, I am an old man of eighty, and I tremble towards the grave. I cannot write many words; but my own hand shall bid you come to the home of Aimée and her husband. They tell me to ask you to come and see the old father's birthplace, while he is yet alive to show it to you. I have the very apartment in Château Chalabre that was mine when I was a boy, and my mother came in to bless me every night. Susan lives near us. The good God bless my sons-in-law, Bertrand de Frez and Alphonse du Fay, as He has blest me all my life long. I think of your father and mother, my dear; and you must think no harm when I tell you I have had masses said for the repose of their souls. If I make a mistake, God will forgive."

My heart could have interpreted this letter, even without

the pretty letter of Aimée and her husband which accompanied it; and which told how, when M. du Fay came over to his friend's wedding, he had seen the younger sister, and in her seen his fate. The soft, caressing, timid Aimée was more to his taste than the grave and stately Susan. Yet little Aimée managed to rule imperiously at Château Chalabre, or rather, her husband was delighted to indulge her every wish: while Susan, in her grand way, made rather a pomp of her conjugal obedience. But they were both good wives, good daughters.

This last summer, you might have seen an old, old man, dressed in grey, with white flowers in his button-hole (gathered by a grand-child as fair as they), leading an elderly lady about the grounds of Château Chalabre, with tottering, unsteady eagerness of gait.

“Here!” said he to me, “just here my mother bade me adieu when first I went to join my regiment. I was impatient to go; I mounted — I rode to yonder great chestnut, and then, looking back, I saw my mother’s sorrowful countenance. I sprang off, threw the reins to the groom, and ran back for one more embrace. ‘My brave boy!’ she said; ‘my own! Be faithful to God and your king!’ I never saw her more; but I shall see her soon; and I think I may tell her I have been faithful both to my God and my king.”

Before now, he has told his mother all.

THE SQUIRE'S STORY.

IN the year 1769, the little town of Barford was thrown into a state of great excitement by the intelligence that a gentleman (and "quite the gentleman," said the landlord of the George Inn), had been looking at Mr. Clavering's old house. This house was neither in the town nor in the country. It stood on the out-skirts of Barford, on the road-side leading to Derby. The last occupant had been a Mr. Clavering — a Northumberland gentleman of good family — who had come to live in Barford while he was but a younger son; but when some elder branches of the family died, he had returned to take possession of the family estate. The house of which I speak was called the White House, from its being covered with a greyish kind of stucco. It had a good garden to the back, and Mr. Clavering had built capital stables, with what were then considered the latest improvements. The point of good stabling was expected to let the house, as it was in a hunting county; otherwise it had few recommendations. There were many bed-rooms; some entered through others, even to the number of five, leading one beyond the other; several sitting-rooms of the small and poky kind, wainscotted round with wood, and then painted a heavy slate colour; one good dining-room, and a drawing-room over it, both looking into the garden, with pleasant bow-windows.

Such was the accommodation offered by the White House. It did not seem to be very tempting to strangers, though the good people of Barford rather piqued themselves on it, as the largest house in the town; and as a house in which "townspeople" and "county people" had often met at Mr. Clavering's friendly dinners. To appreciate this circumstance of pleasant recollection, you should have lived some years in a little

country town, surrounded by gentlemen's seats. You would then understand how a bow or a courtesy from a member of a county family elevates the individuals who receive it almost as much, in their own eyes, as the pair of blue garters fringed with silver, did Mr. Bickerstaff's ward. They trip lightly on air for a whole day afterwards. Now Mr. Clavering was gone, where could town and county mingle?

I mention these things that you may have an idea of the desirability of the letting of the White House in the Barfordites' imagination; and to make the mixture thick and slab, you must add for yourselves, the bustle, the mystery, and the importance which every little event either causes or assumes in a small town; and then, perhaps, it will be no wonder to you that twenty ragged little urchins accompanied the "gentleman" aforesaid to the door of the White House; and that, although he was above an hour inspecting it under the auspices of Mr. Jones, the agent's clerk, thirty more had joined themselves on to the wondering crowd before his exit, and awaited such crumbs of intelligence as they could gather before they were threatened or whipped out of hearing distance. Presently out came the "gentleman" and the lawyer's clerk. The latter was speaking as he followed the former over the threshold. The gentleman was tall, well-dressed, handsome; but there was a sinister cold look in his quick-glancing, light blue eye, which a keen observer might not have liked. There were no keen observers among the boys, and ill-conditioned gaping girls. But they stood too near; inconveniently close; and the gentleman, lifting up his right hand, in which he carried a short riding-whip, dealt one or two sharp blows to the nearest, with a look of savage enjoyment on his face as they moved away whimpering and crying. An instant after, his expression of countenance had changed.

"Here!" said he, drawing out a handful of money, partly silver, partly copper, and throwing it into the midst of them. "Scramble for it! fight it out, my lads! come this afternoon, at three, to the George, and I'll throw you out some more." So the boys hurrahed for him as he walked off with the agent's

clerk. He chuckled to himself, as over a pleasant thought. "I'll have some fun with those lads," he said; "I'll teach 'em to come prowling and prying about me. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll make the money so hot in the fire-shovel that it shall burn their fingers. You come and see the faces and the howling. I shall be very glad if you will dine with me at two; and by that time I may have made up my mind respecting the house."

Mr. Jones, the agent's clerk, agreed to come to the George at two, but, somehow, he had a distaste for his entertainer. Mr. Jones would not like to have said, even to himself, that a man with a purse full of money, who kept many horses, and spoke familiarly of noblemen — above all, who thought of taking the White House — could be anything but a gentleman; but still the uneasy wonder as to who this Mr. Robinson Higgins could be, filled the clerk's mind long after Mr. Higgins, Mr. Higgins's servants, and Mr. Higgins's stud had taken possession of the White House.

The White House was re-stuccoed (this time of a pale yellow colour), and put into thorough repair by the accommodating and delighted landlord; while his tenant seemed inclined to spend any amount of money on internal decorations, which were showy and effective in their character, enough to make the White House a nine days' wonder to the good people of Barford. The slate-coloured paints became pink, and were picked out with gold; the old-fashioned bannisters were replaced by newly gilt ones; but, above all, the stables were a sight to be seen. Since the days of the Roman Emperor never was there such provision made for the care, the comfort, and the health of horses. But every one said it was no wonder, when they were led through Barford, covered up to their eyes, but curving their arched and delicate necks, and prancing with short high steps, in repressed eagerness. Only one groom came with them; yet they required the care of three men. Mr. Higgins, however, preferred engaging two lads out of Barford; and Barford highly approved of his preference. Not only was it kind and thoughtful to give employment to the lounging lads themselves, but they were receiving such a training in Mr.

Higgins's stables as might fit them for Doncaster or Newmarket. The district of Derbyshire in which Barford was situated, was too close to Leicestershire not to support a hunt and a pack of hounds. The master of the hounds was a certain Sir Harry Manley, who was *aut* a huntsman *aut nullus*. He measured a man by the "length of his fork," not by the expression of his countenance, or the shape of his head. But as Sir Harry was wont to observe, there was such a thing as too long a fork, so his approbation was withheld until he had seen a man on horseback; and if his seat there was square and easy, his hand light, and his courage good, Sir Harry hailed him as a brother.

Mr. Higgins attended the first meet of the season, not as a subscriber but as an amateur. The Barford huntsmen piqued themselves on their bold riding; and their knowledge of the country came by nature; yet this new strange man, whom nobody knew, was in at the death, sitting on his horse, both well breathed and calm, without a hair turned on the sleek skin of the latter, supremely addressing the old huntsman as he hacked off the tail of the fox; and he, the old man, who was testy even under Sir Harry's slightest rebuke, and flew out on any other member of the hunt that dared to utter a word against his sixty years' experience as stable-boy, groom, poacher, and what not—he, old Isaac Wormeley, was meekly listening to the wisdom of this stranger, only now and then giving one of his quick, up-turning, cunning glances, not unlike the sharp o'er-canny looks of the poor deceased Reynard, round whom the hounds were howling, unadmonished by the short whip, which was now tucked into Wormeley's well-worn pocket. When Sir Harry rode into the copse—full of dead brushwood and wet tangled grass—and was followed by the members of the hunt, as one by one they cantered past, Mr. Higgins took off his cap and bowed—half deferentially, half insolently—with a lurking smile in the corner of his eye at the discomfited looks of one or two of the laggards. "A famous run, sir," said Sir Harry. "The first time you have hunted in our country; but I hope we shall see you often."

"I hope to become a member of the hunt, sir," said Mr. Higgins.

"Most happy—proud, I'm sure, to receive so daring a rider among us. You took the Cropper-gate, I fancy; while some of our friends here"—scowling at one or two cowards by way of finishing his speech. "Allow me to introduce myself—master of the hounds," he fumbled in his waistcoat pocket for the card on which his name was formally inscribed. "Some of our friends here are kind enough to come home with me to dinner; might I ask for the honour?"

"My name is Higgins," replied the stranger, bowing low. "I am only lately come to occupy the White House at Barford, and I have not as yet presented my letters of introduction."

"Hang it!" replied Sir Harry; "a man with a seat like yours, and that good brush in your hand, might ride up to any door in the county (I'm a Leicestershire man!), and be a welcome guest. Mr. Higgins, I shall be proud to become better acquainted with you over my dinner table."

Mr. Higgins knew pretty well how to improve the acquaintance thus begun. He could sing a good song, tell a good story, and was well up in practical jokes; with plenty of that keen worldly sense, which seems like an instinct in some men, and which in this case taught him on whom he might play off such jokes, with impunity from their resentment, and with a security of applause from the more boisterous, vehement, or prosperous. At the end of twelve months Mr. Robinson Higgins was, out-and-out, the most popular member of the Barford hunt; had beaten all the others by a couple of lengths, as his first patron, Sir Harry, observed one evening, when they were just leaving the dinner-table of an old hunting squire in the neighbourhood.

"Because, you know," said Squire Hearn, holding Sir Harry by the button—"I mean, you see this young spark is looking sweet upon Catherine; and she's a good girl, and will have ten thousand pounds down, the day she's married, by her mother's will; and—excuse me, Sir Harry—but I should not like my girl to throw herself away."

Though Sir Harry had a long ride before him, and but the

early and short light of a new moon to take it in, his kind heart was so much touched by Squire Hearn's trembling, tearful anxiety, that he stopped and turned back into the dining-room to say, with more asseverations than I care to give:

"My good Squire, I may say, I know that man pretty well by this time; and a better fellow never existed. If I had twenty daughters he should have the pick of them."

Squire Hearn never thought of asking the grounds for his old friend's opinion of Mr. Higgins; it had been given with too much earnestness for any doubts to cross the old man's mind as to the possibility of its not being well founded. Mr. Hearn was not a doubter, or a thinker, or suspicious by nature; it was simply his love for Catherine, his only child, that prompted his anxiety in this case; and, after what Sir Harry had said, the old man could totter with an easy mind, though not with very steady legs, into the drawing-room, where his bonny, blushing daughter Catherine and Mr. Higgins stood close together on the hearth-rug — he whispering, she listening with downcast eyes. She looked so happy, so like her dead mother had looked when the Squire was a young man, that all his thought was how to please her most. His son and heir was about to be married, and bring his wife to live with the Squire; Barford and the White House were not distant an hour's ride; and, even as these thoughts passed through his mind, he asked Mr. Higgins, if he could not stay all night — the young moon was already set — the roads would be dark — and Catherine looked up with a pretty anxiety, which, however, had not much doubt in it, for the answer.

With every encouragement of this kind from the old Squire, it took everybody rather by surprise when one morning it was discovered that Miss Catherine Hearn was missing; and when, according to the usual fashion in such cases, a note was found, saying that she had eloped with "the man of her heart," and gone to Gretna Green, no one could imagine why she could not quietly have stopped at home and been married in the parish church. She had always been a romantic, sentimental girl; very pretty and very affectionate, and very much spoiled, and very

much wanting in common sense. Her indulgent father was deeply hurt at this want of confidence in his never-varying affection; but when his son came, hot with indignation from the Baronet's (his future father-in-law's house, where every form of law and of ceremony was to accompany his own impending marriage), Squire Hearn pleaded the cause of the young couple with imploring cogency, and protested that it was a piece of spirit in his daughter, which he admired and was proud of. However, it ended with Mr. Nathaniel Hearn's declaring that he and his wife would have nothing to do with his sister and her husband. "Wait till you've seen him, Nat!" said the old Squire, trembling with his distressful anticipations of family discord, "He's an excuse for any girl. Only ask Sir Harry's opinion of him." "Confound Sir Harry! So that a man sits his horse well, Sir Harry cares nothing about anything else. Who is this man — this fellow? Where does he come from? What are his means? Who are his family?"

"He comes from the south — Surrey or Somersetshire, I forget which; and he pays his way well and liberally. There's not a tradesman in Barford but says he cares no more for money than for water; he spends like a prince, Nat. I don't know who his family are, but he seals with a coat of arms, which may tell you if you want to know — and he goes regularly to collect his rents from his estates in the south. Oh, Nat! if you would but be friendly, I should be as well pleased with Kitty's marriage as any father in the county."

Mr. Nathaniel Hearn gloomed, and muttered an oath or two to himself. The poor old father was reaping the consequences of his weak indulgence to his two children. Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel Hearn kept apart from Catherine and her husband; and Squire Hearn durst never ask them to Levison Hall, though it was his own house. Indeed, he stole away as if he were a culprit whenever he went to visit the White House; and if he passed a night there, he was fain to equivocate when he returned home the next day; an equivocation which was well interpreted by the surly, proud Nathaniel. But the younger Mr. and Mrs. Hearn were the only people who did not visit at the

White House. Mr. and Mrs. Higgins were decidedly more popular than their brother and sister-in-law. She made a very pretty, sweet-tempered hostess, and her education had not been such as to make her intolerant of any want of refinement in the associates who gathered round her husband. She had gentle smiles for townspeople as well as county people; and unconsciously played an admirable second in her husband's project of making himself universally popular.

But there is some one to make ill-natured remarks, and draw ill-natured conclusions from very simple premises, in every place; and in Barford this bird of ill-omen was a Miss Pratt. She did not hunt — so Mr. Higgins's admirable riding did not call out her admiration. She did not drink — so the well-selected wines, so lavishly dispensed among his guests, could never mollify Miss Pratt. She could not bear comic songs, or buffo stories — so, in that way, her approbation was impregnable. And these three secrets of popularity constituted Mr. Higgins's great charm. Miss Pratt sat and watched. Her face looked immoveably grave at the end of any of Mr. Higgins's best stories; but there was a keen, needle-like glance of her unwinking little eyes, which Mr. Higgins felt rather than saw, and which made him shiver, even on a hot day, when it fell upon him. Miss Pratt was a dissenter, and, to propitiate this female Mordecai, Mr. Higgins asked the dissenting minister whose services she attended, to dinner; kept himself and his company in good order; gave a handsome donation to the poor of the chapel. All in vain — Miss Pratt stirred not a muscle more of her face towards graciousness; and Mr. Higgins was conscious that, in spite of all his open efforts to captivate Mr. Davis, there was a secret influence on the other side, throwing in doubts and suspicions, and evil interpretations of all he said or did. Miss Pratt, the little, plain old maid, living on eighty pounds a-year, was the thorn in the popular Mr. Higgins's side, although she had never spoken one uncivil word to him; indeed, on the contrary, had treated him with a stiff and elaborate civility.

The thorn — the grief to Mrs. Higgins was this. They had no children! Oh! how she would stand and envy the careless,

busy motion of half-a-dozen children; and then, when observed, move on with a deep, deep sigh of yearning regret. But it was as well.

It was noticed that Mr. Higgins was remarkably careful of his health. He ate, drank, took exercise, rested, by some secret rules of his own; occasionally bursting into an excess, it is true, but only on rare occasions — such as when he returned from visiting his estates in the south, and collecting his rents. That unusual exertion and fatigue — for there were no stage-coaches within forty miles of Barford, and he, like most country gentlemen of that day, would have preferred riding if there had been — seemed to require some strange excess to compensate for it; and rumours went through the town, that he shut himself up, and drank enormously for some days after his return. But no one was admitted to these orgies.

One day—they remembered it well afterwards—the hounds met not far from the town; and the fox was found in a part of the wild heath, which was beginning to be enclosed by a few of the more wealthy townspeople, who were desirous of building themselves houses rather more in the country than those they had hitherto lived in. Among these, the principal was a Mr. Dudgeon, the attorney of Barford, and the agent for all the county families about. The firm of Dudgeon had managed the leases, the marriage settlements, and the wills, of the neighbourhood for generations. Mr. Dudgeon's father had the responsibility of collecting the land-owners' rents just as the present Mr. Dudgeon had at the time of which I speak: and as his son and his son's son have done since. Their business was an hereditary estate to them; and with something of the old feudal feeling, was mixed a kind of proud humility at their position towards the squires whose family secrets they had mastered, and the mysteries of whose fortunes and estates were better known to the Messrs. Dudgeon than to themselves.

Mr. John Dudgeon had built himself a house on Wildbury Heath; a mere cottage as he called it: but though only two stories high, it spread out far and wide, and workpeople from Derby had been sent for on purpose to make the inside as com-

plete as possible. The gardens too were exquisite in arrangement, if not very extensive; and not a flower was grown in them, but of the rarest species. It must have been somewhat of a mortification to the owner of this dainty place when, on the day of which I speak, the fox after a long race, during which he had described a circle of many miles, took refuge in the garden; but Mr. Dudgeon put a good face on the matter when a gentleman hunter, with the careless insolence of the squires of those days and that place, rode across the velvet lawn, and tapping at the window of the dining-room with his whip-handle, asked permission — no! that is not it — rather, informed Mr. Dudgeon of their intention — to enter his garden in a body, and have the fox unearthed. Mr. Dudgeon compelled himself to smile assent, with the grace of a masculine Griselda; and then he hastily gave orders to have all that the house afforded of provision set out for luncheon, guessing rightly enough that a six hours' run would give even homely fare an acceptable welcome. He bore without wincing the entrance of the dirty boots into his exquisitely clean rooms; he only felt grateful for the care with which Mr. Higgins strode about laboriously and noiselessly moving on the tip of his toes, as he reconnoitred the rooms with a curious eye.

“I’m going to build a house myself, Dudgeon; and, upon my word, I don’t think I could take a better model than yours.”

“Oh! my poor cottage would be too small to afford any hints for such a house as you would wish to build, Mr. Higgins,” replied Mr. Dudgeon, gently rubbing his hands nevertheless at the compliment.

“Not at all! not at all! Let me see. You have dining-room, drawing-room,” — he hesitated, and Mr. Dudgeon filled up the blank as he expected.

“Four sitting-rooms and the bed-rooms. But allow me to show you over the house. I confess I took some pains in arranging it, and, though far smaller than what you would require, it may, nevertheless, afford you some hints.”

So they left the eating gentlemen with their mouths and

their plates quite full, and the scent of the fox overpowering that of the hasty rashers of ham; and they carefully inspected all the ground-floor rooms. Then Mr. Dudgeon said:

"If you are not tired, Mr. Higgins — it is rather my hobby, so you must pull me up if you are — we will go upstairs, and I will show you my *sanctum*."

Mr. Dudgeon's *sanctum* was the centre room, over the porch, which formed a balcony, and which was carefully filled with choice flowers in pots. Inside, there were all kinds of elegant contrivances for hiding the real strength of all the boxes and chests required by the particular nature of Mr. Dudgeon's business: for although his office was in Barford, he kept (as he informed Mr. Higgins) what was the most valuable here, as being safer than an office which was locked up and left every night. But, as Mr. Higgins reminded him with a sly poke in the side, when next they met, his own house was not over-secure. A fortnight after the gentlemen of the Barford hunt lunched there, Mr. Dudgeon's strong-box, — in his *sanctum* upstairs, with the mysterious spring-bolt to the window invented by himself, and the secret of which was only known to the inventor and a few of his most intimate friends, to whom he had proudly shown it; — this strong-box, containing the collected Christmas rents of half-a-dozen landlords, (there was then no bank nearer than Derby,) was rifled; and the secretly rich Mr. Dudgeon had to stop his agent in his purchases of paintings by Flemish artists, because the money was required to make good the missing rents.

The Dogberries and Verges of those days were quite incapable of obtaining any clue to the robber or robbers; and though one or two vagrants were taken up and brought before Mr. Dunover and Mr. Higgins, the magistrates who usually attended in the court-room at Barford, there was no evidence brought against them, and after a couple of nights' durance in the lock-ups they were set at liberty. But it became a standing joke with Mr. Higgins to ask Mr. Dudgeon, from time to time, whether he could recommend him a place of safety for his valuables; or, if he had made any more inventions lately for securing houses from robbers.

About two years after this time — about seven years after Mr. Higgins had been married — one Tuesday evening, Mr. Davis was sitting reading the news in the coffee-room of the George Inn. He belonged to a club of gentlemen who met there occasionally to play at whist, to read what few newspapers and magazines were published in those days, to chat about the market at Derby, and prices all over the country. This Tuesday night, it was a black frost; and few people were in the room. Mr. Davis was anxious to finish an article in the "Gentleman's Magazine;" indeed, he was making extracts from it, intending to answer it, and yet unable with his small income to purchase a copy. So he staid late; it was past nine, and at ten o'clock the room was closed. But while he wrote, Mr. Higgins came in. He was pale and haggard with cold; Mr. Davis, who had had for some time sole possession of the fire, moved politely on one side, and handed to the new comer the sole London newspaper which the room afforded. Mr. Higgins accepted it, and made some remark on the intense coldness of the weather; but Mr. Davis was too full of his article, and intended reply, to fall into conversation readily. Mr. Higgins hitched his chair nearer to the fire, and put his feet on the fender, giving an audible shudder. He put the newspaper on one end of the table near him, and sat gazing into the red embers of the fire, crouching down over them as if his very marrow were chilled. At length he said:

"There is no account of the murder at Bath in that paper?" Mr. Davis, who had finished taking his notes, and was preparing to go, stopped short, and asked:

"Has there been a murder at Bath? No! I have not seen anything of it — who was murdered?"

"Oh! it was a shocking, terrible murder!" said Mr. Higgins not raising his look from the fire, but gazing on with his eyes dilated till the whites were seen all round them. "A terrible, terrible murder! I wonder what will become of the murderer? I can fancy the red glowing centre of that fire — look and see how infinitely distant it seems, and how the distance magnifies it into something awful and unquenchable."

"My dear sir, you are feverish; how you shake and shiver!" said Mr. Davis, thinking privately that his companion had symptoms of fever, and that he was wandering in his mind.

"Oh, no!" said Mr. Higgins. "I am not feverish. It is the night which is so cold." And for a time he talked with Mr. Davis about the article in the "Gentleman's Magazine," for he was rather a reader himself, and could take more interest in Mr. Davis's pursuits than most of the people at Barford. At length it drew near to ten, and Mr. Davis rose up to go home to his lodgings.

"No, Davis, don't go. I want you here. We will have a bottle of port together, and that will put Saunders into good humour. I want to tell you about his murder," he continued, dropping his voice, and speaking hoarse and low. "She was an old woman, and he killed her, sitting reading her Bible by her own fireside!" He looked at Mr. Davis with a strange searching gaze, as if trying to find some sympathy in the horror which the idea presented to him.

"Who do you mean, my dear sir? What is this murder you are so full of? No one has been murdered here."

"No, you fool! I tell you it was in Bath!" said Mr. Higgins, with sudden passion; and then calming himself to most velvet-smoothness of manner, he laid his hand on Mr. Davis's knee, there, as they sat by the fire, and gently detaining him, began the narration of the crime he was so full of; but his voice and manner were constrained to a stony quietude: he never looked in Mr. Davis's face; one or twice, as Mr. Davis remembered afterwards, his grip tightened like a compressing vice.

"She lived in a small house in a quiet old-fashioned street, she and her maid. People said she was a good old woman; but for all that she hoarded and hoarded, and never gave to the poor. Mr. Davis, it is wicked not to give to the poor — wicked — wicked, is it not? I always give to the poor, for once I read in the Bible that 'Charity covereth a multitude of sins.' The wicked old woman never gave, but hoarded her money, and saved, and saved. Some one heard of it; I say she threw a temptation in his way, and God will punish her for it. And this

man — or it might be a woman, who knows? — and this person — heard also that she went to church in the mornings, and her maid in the afternoons; and so — while the maid was at church, and the street and the house quite still, and the darkness of a winter afternoon coming on — she was nodding over the Bible — and that, mark you! is a sin, and one that God will avenge sooner or later; and a step came in the dusk up the stair, and that person I told you of stood in the room. At first he — no! At first, it is supposed — for, you understand, all this is mere guess work — it is supposed that he asked her civilly enough to give him her money, or to tell him where it was; but the old miser defied him, and would not ask for mercy and give up her keys, even when he threatened her, but looked him in the face as if he had been a baby — Oh, God! Mr. Davis, I once dreamt when I was a little innocent boy that I should commit a crime like this, and I wakened up crying; and my mother comforted me — that is the reason I tremble so now — that and the cold, for it is very very cold!"

"But did he murder the old lady?" asked Mr. Davis. "I beg your pardon, sir, but I am interested by your story."

"Yes! he cut her throat; and there she lies yet in her quiet little parlour, with her face upturned and all ghastly white, in the middle of a pool of blood. Mr. Davis, this wine is no better than water; I must have some brandy!"

Mr. Davis was horror-struck by the story, which seemed to have fascinated him as much as it had done his companion.

"Have they got any clue to the murderer?" said he. Mr. Higgins drank down half a tumbler of raw brandy before he answered.

"No! no clue whatever. They will never be able to discover him, and I should not wonder — Mr. Davis — I should not wonder if he repented after all, and did bitter penance for his crime; and if so — will there be mercy for him at the last day?"

"God knows!" said Mr. Davis, with solemnity. "It is an awful story," continued he, rousing himself; "I hardly like to leave this warm light room and go out into the darkness after hearing it. But it must be done," buttoning on his great coat

— “I can only say I hope and trust they will find out the murderer and hang him. — If you'll take my advice, Mr. Higgins, you'll have your bed warmed, and drink a treacle-posset just the last thing; and, if you'll allow me, I'll send you my answer to *Philologus* before it goes up to old Urban.”

The next morning Mr. Davis went to call on Miss Pratt, who was not very well; and by way of being agreeable and entertaining, he related to her all he had heard the night before about the murder at Bath; and really he made a very pretty connected story out of it, and interested Miss Pratt very much in the fate of the old lady — partly because of a similarity in their situations; for she also privately hoarded money, and had but one servant, and stopped at home alone on Sunday afternoons to allow her servant to go to church.

“And when did all this happen?” she asked.

“I don't know if Mr. Higgins named the day; and yet I think it must have been on this very last Sunday.”

“And to-day is Wednesday. Ill news travels fast.”

“Yes, Mr. Higgins thought it might have been in the London newspaper.”

“That it could never be. Where did Mr. Higgins learn all about it?”

“I don't know, I did not ask; I think he only came home yesterday: he had been south to collect his rents, somebody said.”

Miss Pratt grunted. She used to vent her dislike and suspicions of Mr. Higgins in a grunt whenever his name was mentioned.

“Well, I shan't see you for some days. Godfrey Merton has asked me to go and stay with him and his sister; and I think it will do me good. Besides,” added she, “these winter evenings — and these murderers at large in the country — I don't quite like living with only Peggy to call to in case of need.”

Miss Pratt went to stay with her cousin, Mr. Merton. He was an active magistrate, and enjoyed his reputation as such. One day he came in, having just received his letters.

“Bad account of the morals of your little town here, Jessy!” said he, touching one of his letters. “You've either a murderer

among you, or some friend of a murderer. Here's a poor old lady at Bath had her throat cut last Sunday week; and I've a letter from the Home Office, asking to lend them 'my very efficient aid,' as they are pleased to call it, towards finding out the culprit. It seems he must have been thirsty, and of a comfortable jolly turn; for before going to his horrid work he tapped a barrel of ginger wine the old lady had set by to work; and he wrapped the spigot round with a piece of a letter taken out of his pocket, as may be supposed; and this piece of a letter was found afterwards; there are only these letters on the outside, '*ns, Esq., -arford, -egworth,*' which some one has ingeniously made out to mean Barford, near Kegworth. On the other side there is some allusion to a racehorse, I conjecture, though the name is singular enough; 'Church-and-King-and-down-with-the-Rump.'"

Miss Pratt caught at this name immediately; it had hurt her feelings as a dissenter only a few months ago, and she remembered it well.

"Mr. Nat Hearn has — or had (as I am speaking in the witnessbox, as it were, I must take care of my tenses), a horse with that ridiculous name."

"Mr. Nat Hearn," repeated Mr. Merton, making a note of the intelligence; then he recurred to his letter from the Home Office again.

"There is also a piece of a small key, broken in the futile attempt to open a desk — well, well. Nothing more of consequence. The letter is what we must rely upon."

"Mr. Davis said that Mr. Higgins told him —" Miss Pratt began.

"Higgins!" exclaimed Mr. Merton, "*ns.* Is it Higgins, the blustering fellow that ran away with Nat Hearn's sister?"

"Yes!" said Miss Pratt. "But though he has never been a favourite of mine —"

"*ns.*" repeated Mr. Merton. "It is too horrible to think of; a member of the hunt — kind old Squire Hearn's son-in-law! Who else have you in Barford with names that end in *ns?*?"

"There's Jackson, and Higginson, and Blenkinsop, and

Davis and Jones. Cousin! One thing strikes me — how did Mr. Higgins know all about it to tell Mr. Davis on Tuesday what had happened on Sunday afternoon?"

There is no need to add much more. Those curious in lives of the highwaymen may find the name of Higgins as conspicuous among those annals as that of Claude Duval. Kate Hearn's husband collected his rents on the highway, like many another "gentleman" of the day; but, having been unlucky in one or two of his adventures, and hearing exaggerated accounts of the hoarded wealth of the old lady at Bath, he was led on from robbery to murder, and was hung for his crime at Derby, in 1775.

He had not been an unkind husband; and his poor wife took lodgings in Derby to be near him in his last moments — his awful last moments. Her old father went with her everywhere but into her husband's cell; and wrung her heart by constantly accusing himself of having promoted her marriage with a man of whom he knew so little. He abdicated his squireship in favour of his son Nathaniel. Nat was prosperous, and the helpless silly father could be of no use to him; but to his widowed daughter the foolish fond old man was all in all; her knight, her protector, her companion — her most faithful loving companion. Only he ever declined assuming the office of her counsellor — shaking his head sadly, and saying —

"Ah! Kate, Kate! if I had had more wisdom to have advised thee better, thou need'st not have been an exile here in Brussels, shrinking from the sight of every English person as if they knew thy story."

I saw the White House not a month ago; it was to let, perhaps for the twentieth time since Mr. Higgins occupied it; but still the tradition goes in Barford that once upon a time a highwayman lived there, and amassed untold treasures; and that the ill-gotten wealth yet remains walled up in some unknown concealed chamber; but in what part of the house no one knows.

Will any of you become tenants, and try to find out this mysterious closet? I can furnish the exact address to any applicant who wishes for it.

COMPANY MANNERS.

VICTOR COUSIN, the French Philosopher, has undertaken a new task within the last few years. Whether as a relaxation from, or a continuation of, his study of metaphysics, I do not know, but he has begun to write the biographies of some of the celebrated French women of the 17th century. In making out his list, he is careful to distinguish between authoresses and "femmes d'esprit," ranking the latter infinitely the higher in every point of view. The first of his series is Jacqueline Pascal, the sister of Blaise, known at Port Royal as the Sister Euphemia — a holy, pure, and sainted woman. The second whom the grave philosopher has chosen as a subject for his biography is that beautiful, splendid sinner of the Fronde, the fair-haired Duchess de Longueville. He draws the pure and perfect outlines of Jacqueline Pascal's character with a severe and correct pencil; he paints the lovely duchess with the fond, admiring exaggeration of a lover. The wits of Paris in consequence have written the following epitaph for him: "Here lies Victor Cousin, the great philosopher, in love with the Duchess de Longueville, who died a century-and-a-half before he was born."

Even the friends of this Duchess, insignificant in themselves, become dear and illustrious to Cousin for her fair sake. It is not long since he contributed an article on Madame de Sablé to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, which has since been published separately, and which has suggested the thoughts and fancies that I am now going to lay before the patient public. This Madame de Sablé was, in her prime, an habitual guest at the Hôtel Rambouillet, the superb habitation which was the centre of the witty and learned as well as the pompous and pe-

dantic society of Paris, in the days of Louis the Thirteenth. When these gatherings had come to an end after Madame de Rambouillet's death, and before Molière had turned the tradition thereof into exquisite ridicule, there were several attempts to form circles that should preserve some of the stately refinement of the Hôtel Rambouillet. Mademoiselle Scudery had her Saturdays; but, an authoress herself, and collecting around her merely clever people, without regard to birth or breeding, M. Cousin does not hold the idea of her Saturdays in high esteem. Madame de Sablé, a gentlewoman by birth: intelligent enough doubtless from having been an associate of Menage, Voiture, Madame de Sevigné, and others in the grand hotel (whose meetings must have been delightful enough at the time, though that wicked Molière has stepped between us and them, and we can only see them as he chooses us to do): Madame de Sablé, friend of the resplendent fair-haired Duchess de Longueville, had weekly meetings which M. Cousin ranks far above the more pretentious Saturdays of Mademoiselle Scudery. In short, the last page of his memoir of Madame de Sablé,— where we matter-of-fact English people are apt to put in praise of the morals and religion of the person whose life we have been writing,— is devoted to this acme of praise. Madame de Sablé had all the requisites which enabled her “tenir un salon” with honour to herself and pleasure to her friends.

Apart from this crowning accomplishment, the good French lady seems to have been commonplace enough. She was well-born, well-bred, and the company she kept must have made her tolerably intelligent. She was married to a dull husband, and doubtless had her small flirtations after she early became a widow; M. Cousin hints at them, but they were never scandalous, or prominently before the public. Past middle life, she took to the process of “making her salvation;” and inclined to the Port-Royalists. She was given to liking dainty things to eat, in spite of her Jansenism. She had a female friend that she quarrelled with, off and on, during her life. And (to wind up something like Lady O'Looney, of famous memory) she

knew how "tenir un salon." M. Cousin tells us that she was remarkable in no one thing or quality, and attributes to that single simple fact the success of her life.

Now, since I have read these memoirs of Madame de Sablé, I have thought much and deeply thereupon. At first, I was inclined to laugh at the extreme importance which was attached to this art of "receiving company," — no! that translation will not do — "holding a drawing-room," is even worse, because that implies the state and reserve of royalty; — shall we call it the art of "Sabléing?" But when I thought of my experience in English society; of the evenings dreaded before they came, and sighed over in recollection, because they were so ineffably dull; I saw that to Sablé well, did require, as M. Cousin implied, the union of many excellent qualities and not-to-be-disputed little graces. I asked some French people if they could give me the recipe, for it seemed most likely to be traditional, if not still extant in their nation. I offer to you their ideas, fragmentary though they be; and then I will tell you some of my own; at last perhaps, with the addition of yours, oh most worthy readers! we may discover the lost art of Sabléing.

Said the French lady: "A woman to be successful in Sabléing must be past youth, yet not past the power of attracting. She must do this by her sweet and gracious manners, and quick, ready tact in perceiving those who have not had their share of attention, or leading the conversation away from any subject which may give pain to any one present." "Those rules hold good in England," said I. My friend went on: "She should never be prominent in anything; she should keep silence as long as any one else will talk; but when conversation flags, she should throw herself into the breach with the same spirit with which I notice that the young ladies of the house, where a ball is given, stand quietly by till the dancers are tired, and then spring into the arena to carry on the spirit and the music till the others are ready to begin again."

"But," said the French gentleman, "even at this time, when subjects for conversation are wanted, she should rather suggest than enlarge—ask questions rather than give her own opinions."

"To be sure," said the lady. "Madame Recamier, whose salons were the most perfect of this century, always withheld her opinions on books, or men, or measures, until all around her had given theirs; then she, as it were, collected and harmonised them, saying a kind thing here, and a gentle thing there, and speaking ever with her own quiet sense, till people the most opposed learnt to understand each other's point of view, which it is a great thing for opponents to do."

"Then the number of the people whom you receive, is another consideration. I should say not less than twelve, nor more than twenty," continued the gentleman. "The evenings should be appointed — say weekly, — fortnightly at the beginning of January, which is our season. Fix an early hour for opening the room. People are caught then in their freshness, before they become exhausted by other parties."

The lady spoke: "For my part, I prefer catching my friends after they have left the grander balls or receptions. One hears then the remarks, the wit, the reason, and the satire which they had been storing up during their evening of imposed silence or of ceremonious speaking."

"A little good-humoured satire is a very agreeable sauce," replied the gentleman, "but it must be good-humoured, and the listeners must be good-humoured; above all, the conversation must be general, and not the chat, chat, chat up in a corner, by which the English so often distinguish themselves. You do not go into society to exchange secrets with your intimate friends; you go to render yourselves agreeable to every one present, and to help all to pass a happy evening."

"Strangers should not be admitted," said the lady, taking up the strain. "They would not start fair with the others; they would be ignorant of the allusions that refer to conversations on the previous evenings; they would not understand the — what shall I call it — slang? I mean those expressions having relation to past occurrences, or by-gone witticisms common to all those who are in the habit of meeting."

"Madame the Duras and Madame Recamier never made advances to any stranger. Their salons were the best that Paris

has known in this generation. All who wished to be admitted, had to wait and prove their fitness by being agreeable elsewhere; to earn their diploma, as it were, among the circle of these ladies' acquaintances; and, at last, it was a high favour to be received by them."

"They missed the society of many celebrities by adhering so strictly to this unspoken rule," said the gentleman.

"Bah!" said the lady. "Celebrities! what has one to do with them in society? As celebrities, they are simply bores. Because a man has discovered a planet, it does not follow that he can converse agreeably, even on his own subjects; often people are drained dry by one action or expression of their lives — drained dry for all the purposes of a 'salon.' The writer of books, for instance, cannot afford to talk twenty pages for nothing, so he is either profoundly silent, or else he gives you the mere rinsings of his mind. I am speaking now of him as a mere celebrity, and justifying the wisdom of the ladies we were speaking of, in not seeking after such people; indeed, in being rather shy of them. Some of their friends were the most celebrated people of their day, but they were received in their old capacity of agreeable men; a higher character, by far. Then," said she, turning to me, "I believe that you English spoil the perfection of conversation by having your rooms as brilliantly lighted for an evening the charm of which depends on what one hears, as for an evening when youth and beauty are to display themselves among flowers and festoons, and every kind of pretty ornament. I would never have a room affect people as being dark on their first entrance into it; but there is a kind of moonlight as compared to sunlight, in which people talk more freely and naturally; where shy people will enter upon a conversation without a dread of every change of colour or involuntary movement being seen — just as we are always more confidential over a fire than anywhere else — as women talk most openly in the dimly-lighted bedroom at curling-time."

"Away with your shy people," said the gentleman. "Persons who are self-conscious, thinking of an involuntary redness or paleness, an unbecoming movement of the countenance,

more than the subject of which they are talking, should not go into society at all. But, because women are so much more liable to this nervous weakness than men, the preponderance of people in a salon should always be on the side of the men."

I do not think I gained more hints as to the lost art from my French friends. Let us see if my own experience in England can furnish any more ideas.

First, let us take the preparations to be made before our house, our room, or our lodgings, can be made to receive society. Of course I am not meaning the preparations needed for dancing or musical evenings. I am taking those parties which have pleasant conversation and happy social intercourse for their affirmed intention. They may be dinners, suppers, tea — I don't care what they are called, provided their end is defined. If your friends have not dined, and it suits you to give them a dinner, in the name of Lucullus, let them dine; but take care that there shall be something besides the mere food and wine to make their fattening agreeable at the time and pleasant to remember, otherwise you had better pack up for each his portions of the dainty dish, and send it separately, in hot-water trays, so that he can eat comfortably behind a door, like Sancho Panza, and have done with it. And yet I don't see why we should be like ascetics; I fancy there is a grace of preparation, a sort of festive trumpet-call, that is right and proper to distinguish the day on which we receive our friends from common days, unmarked by such white stones. The thought and care we take for them to set before them of our best, may imply some self-denial on our less fortunate days. I have been in houses where all, from the scullion maid upward, worked double-tides gladly, because "Master's friends" were coming; and everything must be nice, and good, and all the rooms must look bright and clean, and pretty. And, as "a merry heart goes all the way," preparations made in this welcoming, hospitable spirit, never seem to tire anyone half so much as where servants instinctively feel that it has been said in the parlour, "We must have so-and-so," or, "Oh dear! we have never had the so-and-so's." Yes, I like a little pomp, and

luxury, and stateliness, to mark our happy days of receiving friends as a festival; but I do not think I would throw my power of procuring luxuries solely into the eating and drinking line.

My friends would probably be surprised (some wear caps, and some wigs) if I provided them with garlands of flowers, after the manner of the ancient Greeks; but, put flowers on the table (none of your shams, wax or otherwise; I prefer an honest way-side root of primroses, in a common vase of white ware, to the grandest bunch of stiff-rustling artificial rarities in a silver épergne). A flower or two by the side of each person's plate would not be out of the way, as to expense, and would be a very agreeable pretty piece of mute welcome. Cooks and scullion-maids, acting in the sympathetic spirit I have described, would do their very best, from boiling the potatoes well, to sending in all the dishes in the best possible order. I think I would have every imaginary dinner sent up on the Original Mr. Walker's plan; each dish separately, hot and hot. I have an idea that when I go to live in Utopia (not before next Christmas), I will have a kind of hot-water sideboard, such as I think I have seen in great houses, and that nothing shall appear on the table but what is pleasant to the eye. However simple the food, I would do it, and my friends (and may I not add the Giver?) the respect of presenting it at table as well-cooked, as eatable, as wholesome as my poor means allowed; and to this end, rather than to a variety of dishes, would I direct my care. We have no associations with beef and mutton; geese may remind us of the Capitol; and peacocks of Juno; a pigeon-pie of "the simplicity of Venus' doves," but who thinks of the leafy covert which has been her home in life, when he sees a roasted hare? Now, flowers as an ornament, do lead our thoughts away from their present beauty and fragrance. I am almost sure Madame de Sablé had flowers in her salon, and as she was fond of dainties herself, I can fancy her smooth benevolence of character, taking delight in some personal preparations made in the morning for the anticipated friends of the evening. I can fancy her stewing sweetbreads in a silver saucepan, or dressing salad with her delicate, plump, white hands; not that I ever

saw a silver saucepan. I was formerly ignorant enough to think that they were only used in the Sleeping Beauty's kitchen, or in the preparations for the marriage of Riquet-with-the-Tuft; but I have been assured that there are such things, and that they impart a most delicate flavour, or no flavour to the victuals cooked therein; so I assert again, Madame de Sablé cooked sweet-breads for her friends in a silver saucepan; but never to fatigue herself with those previous labours. She knew the true taste of her friends too well; they cared for her firstly, as an element in their agreeable evening — the silver saucepan in which they were all to meet; the oil in which their several ingredients were to be softened of what was harsh or discordant — very secondary would be their interest in her sweet-breads.

Of sweetbreads they 'll get mony an ane,
Of Sablé ne'er anither.

But part of my care beforehand should go to the homely article of waiting. I should not mind having none at all; a dumb waiter, pepper, salt, bread, and condiments within the reach or by the side of all. Little kindly attentions from one guest to another tend to take off the selfish character of the mere act of eating; and, besides, the guests would (or should) be too well educated, too delicate of tact, to interrupt a burst of wit, or feeling, or eloquence, as a mere footman often does with the perpetual "Sherry, or Madeira?" or with the names of those mysterious entremets that always remind me of a white kid glove that I once ate with Vsechamel sauce, and found very tender and good, under the name of Oreilles de Veau à-la-something, but which experiment I never wish to repeat. There is something graceful and kindly in the little attention by which one guest silently puts by his neighbour all that he may require. I consider it a better opening to ultimate friendship, if my unknown neighbour mutely passes me the salt, or silently understands that I like sugar to my soup, than if he had been introduced by his full name and title, and labelled with the one distinguishing action or book of his life, after the manner of some who are rather show-men than hosts.

But, to return to the subject of waiting. I have always believed that the charm of those little suppers, famous from time immemorial as the delightful P. S. to operas, was that there was no formal waiting, or over-careful arrangement of the table; a certain sweet neglect pervaded all, very compatible with true elegance. The perfection of waiting is named in the story of the White Cat, where, if you remember, the hero prince is waited upon by hands without bodies, as he sits at table with the White Cat, and is served with that delicate fricassee of mice. By hands without bodies, I am very far from meaning hands without heads. Some people prefer female-waiters; foot-women as it were. I have weighed both sides of the subject well in my mind, before sitting down to write this paper, and my verdict goes in favour of men; for, all other things being equal, their superior strength gives them the power of doing things without effort, and consequently with less noise than any woman. The quiet ease and solemn soundless movement of some men-servants is wonderful to watch. Last summer, I was staying in a house served by such list-shod, soft-spoken, velvet-handed domestics. One day, the butler touched a spoon with a fork; — the master of the house looked at him as Jupiter may have looked at Hebe, when she made that clumsy step. "No noise, sir, if you please;" and we, as well as the servant, were hushed into the solemn stillness of the room, and were graced and genteel, if not merry and sociable. Still, bursts and clashes, and clatters at the side-table, do disturb conversation; and I maintain that for avoiding these, men-servants are better than women. Women have to add an effort to the natural exercise of what strength they possess before they can lift heavy things — sirloins of beef, saddles of mutton, and the like; and they cannot calculate the additional force of such an effort, so down comes the dish and the mutton and all, with a sound and a splash that surprises us even more than the Phillis, who is neat-handed only when she has to do with things that require delicacy and lightness of touch, not struggle of arm.

And, now I think of it, Mademoiselle de Sablé must have taken the White Cat for her model: there must evidently have

been the same noiseless ease and grace about the movements of both; the same purring, happy, inarticulate moments of satisfaction, when surrounded by pleasant circumstances, must have been uttered by both. My own mouth has watered before now at the account of that fricassee of mice prepared especially for the White Cat; and M. Cousin alludes more than once to Madame de Sablé's love for "friandises." Madame de Sablé avoided the society of literary women, and so I am sure did the White Cat. Both had an instinctive sense of what was comfortable; both loved home with tenacious affection; and yet I am mistaken if each had not their own little private love adventure — touches of the gipsy.

The reason why I think Madame de Sablé had this touch in her is because she knew how "tenir un salon." You do not see the connection between gipsyism and the art of being a good hostess, — of receiving pleasantly. I do; but I am not sure if I can explain it. In the first place, gipsies must be people of quick impulse and ready wit; entering into fresh ideas, and new modes of life with joyous ardour and energy, and fertile in expedients for extricating themselves from the various difficulties into which their wandering life leads them. They must have a lofty disregard for "convenances," and yet a power of graceful adaptation. They evidently have a vivid sense of the picturesque, and a love of adventure, which, if it does not show itself in action, must show itself in sympathy with others' doings. Now, which of these qualities would be out of place in Madame de Sablé? From what we read of the life of her contemporary, Madame de Sevigné, we see that impromptu expedients were necessary in those times, when the thought of the morning made the pleasure of the evening, and when people snatched their enjoyments from hand to mouth, as it were, while yet six-weeks-invitations were not. Now, I have noticed that in some parties where we were all precise and sensible, ice-bound under some indefinable stiff restraint, some little domestic contre-temps, if frankly acknowledged by the hostess, has suddenly unloosed tongues and hearts in a supernatural manner;

"The upper air bursts into life,"

more especially if some unusual expedient had to be resorted to, giving the whole the flavour and zest of a pic-nic. Toasting bread in a drawing-room, coaxing up a half-extinguished fire by dint of brown sugar, newspapers, and pretty good-for-nothing bellows, turning a packing-case upside down for a seat, and covering in with a stray piece of velvet; these are, I am afraid, the only things that can call upon us for unexpected exertion, now that all is arranged and re-arranged for every party a month beforehand. But I have lived in other times, and other places, I have been in the very heart and depth of Wales; within three miles of the house of the high sheriff of the county, who was giving a state-dinner on a certain day, to which the gentleman with whom I was staying was invited. He was on the point of leaving his house in his little Norwegian carriage, and we were on the point of sitting down to dinner, when a man rode up in hot haste—a servant from the high sheriff's came to beg for our joint off the spit. Fish, game, poultry—they had all the delicacies of their own land; but the butcher from the nearest market town had failed them, and at the last moment they had to send off a groom a-begging to their neighbours. My relation departed ignorant of our dinnerless state; but he came back in great delight with his party. After the soup and fish had been removed, there had been a long pause (the joint had got cold on its ride, and had to be re-warmed); a message was brought to the host, who had immediately confided his perplexity to his guests, and put it to the vote whether they would wait for the joint, or have the order of the courses changed, and eat the third before the second. Every one had enjoyed the merry dilemma; the ice was broken, and all went on pleasantly and easily in a party where there was rather a heterogeneous mixture of politics and opinions. Dinner parties in those days and in that part of Wales were somewhat regulated by the arrival of the little sailing vessels, which, having discharged their cargo at Bristol or Liverpool, brought back commissioned purchases for the different families. A chest of oranges for Mr. Williams, or Mr. Wynn, was a sure signal that before many days were

over, Mr. Williams or Mr. Wynn would give a dinner party; strike while the iron was hot; eat while the oranges were fresh. A man rode round to all the different houses when any farmer planned such a mighty event as killing a cow, to ask what part each family would take. Visiting acquaintances lived ten or twelve miles from each other, separated by bad and hilly roads; the moon had always to be consulted before issuing invitations; and then the mode of proceeding was usually something like this. The invited friends came to dinner at half-past five or six; these were always those from the greatest distance, — the nearer neighbours came later on in the evening. After the gentlemen had left the dining-room, it was cleared for dancing. The fragments of the dinner, prepared by ready cooks, served for supper; tea was ready sometime towards one or two, and the dancers went merrily on till a seven or eight o'clock breakfast, after which they rode or drove home by broad daylight. I was never at one of these meetings, although staying in a house from which many went; I was considered too young; but from what I heard they were really excessively pleasant, sociable gatherings, although not quite intitled to be classed with Madame de Sablé's salons.

To return to the fact that a slightly gipsy and impromptu character, either in the hostess or in the arrangements, or in the amusements, adds a piquancy to the charm: let any one remember the agreeable private teas that go on in many houses about five o'clock. I remember those in one house particularly, as remarkably illustrating what I am trying to prove. These teas were held in a large dismantled school-room, and a superannuated school-room is usually the most doleful chamber imaginable. I never saw this by full day-light, I only know that it was lofty and large, that we went to it through a long gallery library, through which we never passed at any other time, the school-room having been accessible to the children in former days by a private staircase — that great branches of trees swept against the windows with a long plaintive moan, as if tortured by the wind, — that below in the stable-yard two Irish stag-hounds sent up their-musical bays to mingle with the outlandish

Spanish which a parrot in the room continually talked out of the darkness in which its perch was placed,— that the walls of the room seemed to recede as in a dream, and, instead of them the flickering firelight painted tropical forests or Norwegian fiords, according to the will of our talkers. I know this tea was nominally private to the ladies, but that all the gentlemen strayed in most punctually by accident — that the fire was always in that state when somebody had to poke with the hard blows of despair, and somebody else to fetch in logs of wood from the basket outside, and somebody else to unload his pockets of fir-bobs, which last were always efficacious, and threw beautiful dancing lights far and wide. And then there was a black kettle, long ago too old for kitchen use, that leaked and ran, and sputtered against the blue and sulphur-coloured flames, and did everything that was improper, but the water out of which made the best tea in the world, which we drank out of unmatched cups, the relics of several school-room sets. We ate thick bread and butter in the darkness with a vigour of appetite which had quite disappeared at the well-lighted eight o'clock dinner. Who eat it I don't know, for we stole from our places round the fire-side to the tea-table in comparative darkness in the twilight near the window and helped ourselves, and came back on tiptoe to hear one of the party tell of wild enchanted spicy islands in the Eastern Archipelago, or buried cities in farthest Mexico; he used to look into the fire and draw, and paint with words in a manner perfectly marvellous, and with an art which he had quite lost at the formal dinner-time. Our host was scientific; a name of high repute; he too told us of wonderful discoveries, strange surmises, glimpses into something far away and utterly dream-like. His son had been in Norway fishing; then, when he sat all splashed with hunting, he too could tell of adventures in a natural racy way. The girls busy with their heavy kettle, and with their tea-making, put in a joyous word now and then. At dinner the host talked of nothing more intelligible than French mathematics; the heir drawled out an infinite deal of nothing about the "Shakspeare and musical glasses" of the day; the traveller gave us latitudes

and longitudes, and rates of population, exports and imports, with the greatest precision; and the girls were as pretty, helpless, inane fine ladies as you would wish to see.

Speaking of wood fires, reminds me of Madame de Sablé's fires. Of course they were of wood, being in Paris; but I believe that even if she had lived in a coal country she would have burned wood by instinctive preference, as a lady I once knew, always ordered a lump of cannel coal to be brought up if ever her friends seemed silent and dull. A woodfire has a kind of spiritual, dancing, glancing life about it. It is an elvish companion, crackling, hissing, bubbling: throwing out beautiful jets of vivid many-coloured flame. The best wood-fires I know, are those at Keswick. Making lead pencils is the business of the place; and the cedar chips for scent, and the thinnings of the larch and fir plantations thereabouts for warm and brilliant light, make such a fire as Madame de Sablé would have delighted in.

Depend upon it too, every seat in her salon was easy and comfortable of its kind. They might not be made of any rare kind of wood, nor covered very magnificently, but the bodies of her friends could rest and repose in them in easy unconstrained attitudes. No one can be agreeable, perched on a chair which does not afford space for proper support. I defy the most accomplished professional wit to go on uttering "mots" in a chair with a stiff, hard upright back, or with his legs miserably dangling. No! Madame de Sablé's seats were commodious, and probably varied to suit all tastes; nor was there anything in the shape of a large and cumbrous article of furniture placed right in the middle of her room, so as to prevent her visitors from changing their places, or drawing near to each other, or to the fire, if they so willed it. I imagine, likewise, that she had that placid, kindly manner, which would never show any loss of self-possession. I fancy that there was a welcome ready for all, even though some came a little earlier than they were expected.

I was once very much struck by the perfect breeding of an old Welsh herb-woman, with whom I drank tea, — a tea which

was not tea after all,—an infusion of balm and black currant leaves, with a pinch of lime blossom to give it a Pekoe flavour. She had boasted of the delicacy of this beverage to me on the previous day, and I had begged to be allowed to come and drink a cup with her. The only drawback was that she had but one cup, but she immediately bethought her that she had two saucers, one of which would do just as well, indeed better than any cup. I was anxious to be in time, and so I was too early. She had not done dusting and rubbing when I arrived, but she made no fuss; she was glad to see me, and quietly bade me welcome, though I had come before all was as she could have wished. She gave me a dusted chair, sate down herself, with her kilted petticoats and working apron, and talked to me as if she had not a care or a thought on her mind but the enjoyment of the present time. By-and-by, in moving about the room, she slipped behind the bed-curtain, still conversing. I heard the splash of water, and a drawer open and shut; and then my hostess emerged spruce, and clean, and graced, but not one whit more agreeable or at her ease than she had been for the previous half hour in her working dress.

There are a set of people who put on their agreeableness with their gowns. Here again I have studied the subject, and the result is, that I find people of this description are more pleasant in society in their second-best than in their very best dresses. These last are new; and the persons I am speaking of never feel thoroughly at home in them, never lose their consciousness of unusual finery until the first stain has been made. With their best gowns they put on an unusual fineness of language; they say “commence” instead of “begin;” they enquire if they may “assist” instead of asking if they may “help” you to anything. And yet there are some, very far from vain or self-conscious, who are never so agreeable as when they have a dim, half-defined idea that they are looking their best — not in finery, but in air, arrangement, or complexion. I have a notion that Madame de Sablé, with her fine instincts, was aware of this, and that there were one or two secrets about the furniture and disposition of light in her salon which are lost in these de-

generate days. I heard, or read, lately, that we make a great mistake in furnishing our reception-rooms with all the light and delicate colours, the profusion of ornament, and flecked and spotted chintzes, if we wish to show off the human face and figure; that our ancestors and the great painters knew better, with their somewhat sombre and heavy-tinted back-grounds, relieving or throwing out into full relief the rounded figure and the delicate peach-like complexion.

I fancy Madame de Sablé's salon was furnished with deep warm soberness of tone; lightened up by flowers, and happy animated people, in a brilliancy of dress which would be lost now-a-days against our satin walls, and flower-bestrewn carpets, and gilding, gilding everywhere. Then, somehow, conversation must have flowed naturally into sense or nonsense, as the case might be. People must have gone to her house well prepared for either lot. It might be that wit would come uppermost, sparkling, crackling, leaping, calling out echoes all around; or the same people might talk with all their might and wisdom, on some grave and important subject of the day, in that manner which we have got into the way of calling "earnest," but which term has struck me as being slightly flavoured by cant, ever since I heard of an "earnest uncle." At any rate, whether grave or gay, people did not go up to Madame de Sablé's salons with a set purpose of being either the one or the other. They were carried away by the subject of the conversation, by the humour of the moment. I have visited a good deal among a set of people who piqued themselves on being rational. We have talked what they called sense, but what I call platitudes, till I have longed, like Southey in the Doctor, to come out with some interminable nonsensical word (Aballibogibouganorribo was his, I think), as a relief for my despair at not being able to think of anything more that was sensible. It would have done me good to have said it, and I could have started afresh on the rational tack. But I never did. I sank into inane silence, which I hope was taken for wisdom. One of this set paid a relation of mine a profound compliment, for so she meant it to be, "Oh, Miss F.! you are so trite!" But as it is not in every one's power to be rational,

and "trite," at all times and in all places, discharging our sense at a given place, like water from a fireman's hose; and as some of us are cisterns rather than fountains, and may have our stores exhausted, why is it not more general to call in other aids to conversation, in order to enable us to pass an agreeable evening?

But I will come back to this presently. Only let me say that there is but one thing more tiresome than an evening when everybody tries to be profound and sensible, and that is an evening when everybody tries to be witty. I have a disagreeable sense of effort and unnaturalness at both times; but the everlasting attempt, even when it succeeds, to be clever and amusing, is the worse of the two. People try to say brilliant rather than true things; they not only catch eager hold of the superficial and ridiculous in other persons, and in events generally, but from constantly looking out for subjects for jokes, and "mots," and satire, they become possessed of a kind of sore susceptibility themselves, and are afraid of their own working selves, and dare not give way to any expression of feeling, or any noble indignation or enthusiasm. This kind of wearying wit is far different from humour, which wells up and forces its way out irrepressibly, and calls forth smiles and laughter, but not very far apart from tears. Depend upon it, some of Madame de Sablé's friends had been moved in a most abundant and genial measure. They knew how to narrate too. Very simple, say you? I say, no! I believe the art of telling a story is born with some people, and these have it to perfection; but all might acquire some expertness in it, and ought to do so, before launching out into the muddled, complex, hesitating, broken, disjointed, poor, bald, accounts of events which have neither unity, nor colour, nor life, nor end in them, that one sometimes hears.

But as to the rational parties that are in truth so irrational, when all talk up to an assumed character, instead of showing themselves what they really are, and so extending each other's knowledge of the infinite and beautiful capacities of human nature—whenever I see the grave sedate faces, with their good,

but anxious expression, I remember how I was once, long ago, at a party like this; every one had brought out his or her wisdom, and aired it for the good of the company; one or two had from a sense of duty, and without any special living interest in the matter, improved us by telling us of some new scientific discovery, the details of which were all and each of them wrong, as I learnt afterwards; if they had been right, we should not have been any the wiser: — and just at the pitch when any more useful information might have brought on congestion of the brain, a stranger to the town, a beautiful, audacious, but most feminine romp, proposed a game, and such a game, for us wise men of Gotham! But she (now long still and quiet after her bright life, so full of pretty pranks) was a creature whom all who looked on loved; and with grave hesitating astonishment we knelt round a circular table at her word of command. She made one of the circle, and producing a feather out of some sofa pillow, she told us she should blow it up into the air, and whichever of us it floated near, must puff away to keep it from falling on the table. I suspect we all looked like Keeley in the “Camp at Chobham,” and were surprised at our own obedience to this ridiculous, senseless mandate, given with a graceful imperiousness, as if it were too royal to be disputed. We knelt on, puffing away with the utmost intentness, looking like a set of elderly —

“Fools!” No! my dear Sir. I was going to say elderly cherubim. But making fools of ourselves, was better than making owls, as we had been doing.

I will mention another party, where a game of some kind would have been a blessing. It was at a very respectable tradesman’s house. We went at half-past four, and found a well-warmed handsome sitting-room, with block upon block of unburnt coal behind the fire; on the table there was a tray with wine and cake, oranges and almonds and raisins, of which we were urged to partake. In half-an-hour came tea; none of your flimsy meals, with wafer bread and butter, and three biscuits and a half. This was a grave and serious proceeding; tea, coffee, bread of all kinds, cold fowl, tongue, ham, potted meats

— I don't know what. Tea lasted about an hour, and then the cake and wine tray was restored to its former place. The stock of subjects of common interest was getting low, and, in spite of our good-will long stretches of silence occurred, producing a stillness, which made our host nervously attack the fire, and stir it up to a yet greater glow of intense heat; and the hostess invariably rose at such times, and urged us to "eat another macaroon." The first I revelled in, the second I enjoyed, the third I got through, the fourth I sighed over, the fifth reminded me uncomfortably of that part of Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, where he feeds a donkey with maccaroons,— and when, at the sight of the sixth, I rose to come away, a burst of imploring, indignant surprise greeted me: "You are surely never going before supper!" I stopped. I ate that supper. Hot jugged hare, hot roast turkey, hot boiled ham, hot apple-tart, hot toasted cheese. No wonder I am old before my time. Now these good people were really striving, and taking pains, and laying out money, to make the evening pass agreeably, but the only way they could think of to amuse their guests, was, giving them plenty to eat. If they had asked one of their children they could doubtless have suggested half-a-dozen games, which we could all have played at when our subjects of common interest failed, and which would have carried us over the evening quietly and simply, if not brilliantly. But in many a small assemblage of people, where the persons collected are incongruous, where talking cannot go on through so many hours, without becoming flat or laboured, why have we not oftener recourse to games of some kind?

Wit, Advice, Bout-rimés, Lights, Spanish merchant, Twenty Questions — every one knows these, and many more, if they would only not think it beneath them to be called upon by a despairing hostess to play at them. Of course to play them well requires a little more exertion of intellect than quoting other people's sense and wisdom, or misquoting science. But I do not think it takes as much thought and memory, and consideration, as it does to be "up" in the science of good eating and drinking. A profound knowledge of this branch of learning seems in

general to have absorbed all the faculties before it could be brought to anything like perfection. So I do not consider games as entailing so much mental fatigue as a man must undergo before he is qualified to decide upon dishes. I once noticed the worn and anxious look of a famous diner-out, when called upon by his no less anxious host to decide upon the merits of a salad, mixed by no hands, as you may guess, but those of the host in question. The guest, doctor of the art of good living, tasted, paused, tasted again, — and then, with gentle solemnity, gave forth his condemnatory opinion. I happened to be his next neighbour, and slowly turning his meditative full-moon face round to me, he gave me the valuable information that to eat a salad in perfection some one should be racing from lettuce to shalot, from shalot to endive, and so on, all the time that soup and fish were being eaten; that the vegetables should be gathered, washed, sliced, blended, eaten, all in a quarter of an hour. I bowed as in the presence of a master; and felt no wonder his head was bald, and his face heavily wrinkled.

I have said nothing of books. Yet I am sure that if Madame de Sablé lived now, they would be seen in her salon as part of its natural indispensable furniture; not brought out, and strewed here and there when “company was coming,” but as habitual presences in her room, wanting which, she would want a sense of warmth and comfort and companionship. Putting out books as a sort of preparation for an evening, as a means for making it pass agreeably, is running a great risk. In the first place, books are by such people, and on such occasions, chosen more for their outside than their inside. And in the next, they are the “mere material with which wisdom (or wit) builds;” and if persons don’t know how to use the material, they will suggest nothing. I imagine Madame de Sablé would have the volumes she herself was reading, or those which, being new, contained any matter of present interest, left about, as they would naturally be. I could also fancy that her guests would not feel bound to talk continually, whether they had anything to say or not, but that there might be pauses of not unpleasant silence —

a quiet darkness out of which they might be certain that the little stars would glimmer soon. I can believe that in such pauses of repose, some one might open a book, and catching on a suggestive sentence, might dash off again into the full flow of conversation. But I cannot fancy any grand preparations for what was to be said among people, each of whom brought the best dish in bringing himself; and whose own store of living, individual thought and feeling, and mother-wit, would be infinitely better than any cut-and-dry determination to devote the evening to mutual improvement. If people are really good and wise, their goodness and their wisdom flow out unconsciously, and benefit like sunlight. So, books for reference, books for impromptu suggestion, but never books to serve for texts to a lecture. Engravings fall under something like the same rules. To some they say everything; to ignorant and unprepared minds nothing. I remember noticing this in watching how people looked at a very valuable portfolio belonging to an acquaintance of mine, which contained engraved and authentic portraits of almost every possible person; from king and kaiser down to notorious beggars and criminals; including all the celebrated men, women, and actors whose likenesses could be obtained. To some, this portfolio gave food for observation, meditation and conversation. It brought before them every kind of human tragedy,— every variety of scenery and costume and grouping in the back-ground, thronged with figures called up by their imagination. Others took them up and laid them down, simply saying, "This is a pretty face!" "Oh what a pair of eyebrows!" "Look at this queer dress!"

Yet, after all, having something to take up and to look at, is a relief and of use to persons who, without being self-conscious, are nervous from not being accustomed to society. Oh Cassandra! Remember when you with your rich gold coins of thought, with your noble power of choice expression, were set down, and were thankful to be set down, to look at some paltry engravings, just because people did not know how to get at your ore, and you did not care a button whether they did or not, and were

rather bored by their attempts, the end of which you never found out. While I, with my rattling tinselly rubbish, was thought "agreeable and an acquisition!" You would have been valued at Madame de Sable's, where the sympathetic and intellectual stream of conversation would have borne you and your golden fragments away with it, by its soft resistless gentle force.

MR. HARRISON'S CONFESSIONS.

CHAPTER I.

THE fire was burning gaily. My wife had just gone upstairs to put baby to bed. Charles sat opposite to me, looking very brown and handsome. It was pleasant enough that we should feel sure of spending some weeks under the same roof, a thing which we had never done since we were mere boys. I felt too lazy to talk, so I eat walnuts and looked into the fire. But Charles grew restless.

“Now that your wife is gone upstairs, Will, you must tell me what I’ve wanted to ask you ever since I saw her this morning. Tell me all about the wooing and winning. I want to have the receipt for getting such a spicy little wife of my own. Your letters only gave the barest details. So set to, man, and tell me every particular.”

“If I tell you all, it will be a long story.”

“Never fear. If I get tired, I can go to sleep, and dream that I am back again, a lonely bachelor, in Ceylon; and I can waken up when you have done, to know that I am under your roof. Dash away, man! ‘Once upon a time, a gallant young bachelor —’ There’s a beginning for you!”

“Well, then, ‘once upon a time, a gallant young bachelor’ was sorely puzzled where to settle, when he had completed his education as a surgeon. — I must speak in the first person; I cannot go on as a gallant young bachelor. — I had just finished walking the hospitals when you went to Ceylon, and, if you remember, I wanted to go abroad like you, and thought of offering myself as a ship-surgeon; but I found I should rather lose caste in my profession; so I hesitated, and, while I was

hesitating, I received a letter from my father's cousin, Mr. Morgan,—that old gentleman who used to write such long letters of good advice to my mother, and who tipped me a five-pound note when I agreed to be bound apprentice to Mr. Howard, instead of going to sea. Well, it seems the old gentleman had all along thought of taking me as his partner, if I turned out pretty well; and as he heard a good account of me from an old friend of his, who was a surgeon at Guy's, he wrote to propose this arrangement: I was to have a third of the profits for five years; after that, half; and eventually I was to succeed to the whole. It was no bad offer for a penniless man like me, as Mr. Morgan had a capital country practice, and, though I did not know him personally, I had formed a pretty good idea of him, as an honourable, kind-hearted, fidgetty, meddlesome old bachelor; and a very correct notion it was, as I found out in the very first half-hour of seeing him. I had had some idea that I was to live in his house, as he was a bachelor and a kind of family friend; and I think he was afraid that I should expect this arrangement, for when I walked up to his door, with the porter carrying my portmanteau, he met me on the steps, and while he held my hand and shook it, he said to the porter, 'Jerry, if you 'll wait a moment, Mr. Harrison will be ready to go with you to his lodgings, at Jocelyn's, you know;' and then turning to me, he addressed his first words of welcome. I was a little inclined to think him inhospitable, but I got to understand him better afterwards. 'Jocelyn's,' said he, 'is the best place I have been able to hit upon in a hurry, and there is a good deal of fever about, which made me desirous that you should come this month,—a low kind of typhoid, in the oldest part of the town. I think you 'll be comfortable there for a week or two. I have taken the liberty of desiring my housekeeper to send down one or two things which give the place a little more of a home aspect,—an easy chair, a beautiful case of preparations, and one or two little matters in the way of eatables; but if you 'll take my advice, I 've a plan in my head which we will talk about to-morrow morning. At present, I don't like to keep you standing out on the steps here, so I 'll not detain you from

your lodgings, where I rather think my housekeeper is gone to get tea ready for you.'

"I thought I understood the old gentleman's anxiety for his own health, which he put upon care for mine, for he had on a kind of loose grey coat, and no hat on his head. But I wondered that he did not ask me in-doors, instead of keeping me on the steps. I believe, after all, I made a mistake in supposing he was afraid of taking cold; he was only afraid of being seen in *dishabille*. And as for his apparent inhospitality, I had not been long in Duncombe before I understood the comfort of having one's house considered as a castle into which no one might intrude, and saw good reason for the practice Mr. Morgan had established of coming to his door to speak to every one. It was only the effect of habit that made him receive me so. Before long, I had the free run of his house.

"There was every sign of kind attention and forethought on the part of some one, whom I could not doubt to be Mr. Morgan, in my lodgings. I was too lazy to do much that evening, and sat in the little bow-window which projected over Jocelyn's shop, looking up and down the street. Duncombe calls itself a town, but I should call it a village. Really, looking from Jocelyn's, it is a very picturesque place. The houses are anything but regular; they may be mean in their details; but altogether they look well; they have not that flat unrelieved front, which many towns of far more pretensions present. Here and there a bow-window — every now and then a gable, cutting up against the sky — occasionally a projecting upper story — throws good effect of light and shadow along the street; and they have a queer fashion of their own of colouring the whitewash of some of the houses with a sort of pink blotting-paper tinge, more like the stone of which Mayence is built than anything else. It may be very bad taste, but to my mind it gives a rich warmth to the colouring. Then, here and there a dwelling-house has a court in front, with a grass-plot on each side of the flagged walk, and a large tree or two — limes or horse-chestnuts — which send their great projecting upper branches over into the street,

making round dry places of shelter on the pavement in the times of summer showers.

"While I was sitting in the bow-window, thinking of the contrast between this place and the lodgings in the heart of London, which I had left only twelve hours before, — the window open here, and, although in the centre of the town, admitting only scents from the mignonette boxes on the sill, instead of the dust and smoke of — Street, — the only sound heard in this, the principal street, being the voices of mothers calling their playing children home to bed, and the eight o'clock bell of the old parish church bimbomming in remembrance of the curfew; — while I was sitting thus idly, the door opened, and the little maid-servant, dropping a courtesy, said —

"Please, sir, Mrs. Munton's compliments, and she would be glad to know how you are after your journey."

"There! was not that hearty and kind? Would even the dearest chum I had at Guy's have thought of doing such a thing? while Mrs. Munton, whose name I had never heard of before, was doubtless suffering anxiety till I could relieve her mind by sending back word that I was pretty well.

"My compliments to Mrs. Munton, and I am pretty well: much obliged to her.' It was as well to say only 'pretty well,' for 'very well' would have destroyed the interest Mrs. Munton evidently felt in me. Good Mrs. Munton! Kind Mrs. Munton! Perhaps, also, young, — handsome, — rich, — widowed Mrs. Munton! I rubbed my hands with delight and amusement, and, resuming my post of observation, began to wonder at which house Mrs. Munton lived.

"Again the little tap, and the little maid-servant:

"Please, sir, Miss Tomkinsons' compliments; and they would be glad to know how you feel yourself after your journey.'

"I don't know why, but Miss Tomkinsons' name had not such a halo about it as Mrs. Munton's. Still it was very pretty in Miss Tomkinsons to send and inquire. I only wished I did not feel so perfectly robust. I was almost ashamed that I could not send word I was quite exhausted by fatigue, and had fainted twice since my arrival. If I had but had a headache, at least!

I heaved a deep breath: my chest was in perfect order; I had caught no cold; so I answered again —

“ ‘Much obliged to the Miss Tomkinsons; I am not much fatigued; tolerably well; my compliments.’ ”

“ Little Sally could hardly have got down-stairs, before she returned, bright and breathless: —

“ ‘Mr. and Mrs. Bullock’s compliments, sir; and they hope you are pretty well after your journey.’ ”

“ Who would have expected such kindness from such an unpromising name? Mr. and Mrs. Bullock were less interesting, it is true, than their predecessors; but I graciously replied —

“ ‘My compliments; a night’s rest will perfectly recruit me.’ ”

“ The same message was presently brought up from one or two more unknown kind hearts. I really wished I were not so ruddy-looking. I was afraid I should disappoint the tender-hearted town when they saw what a hale young fellow I was. And I was almost ashamed of confessing to a great appetite for supper when Sally came up to inquire what I would have. Beef-steaks were so tempting; but perhaps I ought rather to have water-gruel, and go to bed. The beef-steak carried the day, however. I need not have felt such a gentle elation of spirits, as this mark of the town’s attention is paid to every one when they arrive after a journey. Many of the same people have sent to inquire after you, — great, hulking, brown fellow as you are, — only Sally spared you the infliction of devising interesting answers.”

CHAPTER II.

“ THE next morning Mr. Morgan came before I had finished breakfast. He was the most dapper little man I ever met. I see the affection with which people cling to the style of dress that was in vogue when they were beaux and belles, and received the most admiration. They are unwilling to believe that their youth and beauty are gone, and think that the prevailing mode is unbecoming. Mr. Morgan will inveigh by the hour together against frock-coats, for instance, and whiskers. He keeps

his chin close shaven, wears a black dress-coat, and dark-grey pantaloons; and in his morning round to his town patients, he invariably wears the brightest and blackest of Hessian boots, with dangling silk tassels on each side. When he goes home, about ten o'clock, to prepare for his ride to see his country patients, he puts on the most dandy top-boots I ever saw, which he gets from some wonderful boot-maker a hundred miles off. His appearance is what one calls 'jemmy:' there is no other word that will do for it. He was evidently a little discomfited when he saw me in my breakfast costume, with the habits which I brought with me from the fellows at Guy's; my feet against the fire-place, my chair balanced on its hind legs (a habit of sitting which I afterwards discovered he particularly abhorred;) slippers on my feet (which, also, he considered a most ungentlemanly piece of untidiness 'out of a bedroom'); in short, from what I afterwards learned, every prejudice he had was outraged by my appearance on this first visit of his. I put my book down, and sprang up to receive him. He stood, hat and cane in hand.

" 'I came to inquire if it would be convenient for you to accompany me on my morning's round, and to be introduced to a few of our friends.' I quite detected the little tone of coldness, induced by his disappointment at my appearance, though he never imagined that it was in any way perceptible. 'I will be ready directly, sir,' said I; and bolted into my bedroom, only too happy to escape his scrutinising eye.

" When I returned, I was made aware, by sundry indescribable little coughs and hesitating noises, that my dress did not satisfy him. I stood ready, hat and gloves in hand; but still he did not offer to set off on our round. I grew very red and hot. At length he said —

" 'Excuse me, my dear young friend, but may I ask if you have no other coat besides that — 'cut-away,' I believe you call them? — We are rather sticklers for propriety, I believe, in Duncombe; and much depends on a first impression. Let it be professional, my dear sir. Black is the garb of our pro-

fection. Forgive my speaking so plainly, but I consider myself *in loco parentis.*’

“He was so kind, so bland, and, in truth, so friendly, that I felt it would be most childish to take offence; but I had a little resentment in my heart at this way of being treated. However, I mumbled, ‘Oh, certainly, sir, if you wish it;’ and returned once more to change my coat — my poor cut-away.

“‘Those coats, sir, give a man rather too much of a sporting appearance, not quite befitting the learned professions; more as if you came down here to hunt than to be the Galen or Hippocrates of the neighbourhood.’ He smiled graciously, so I smothered a sigh; for, to tell you the truth, I had rather anticipated — and, in fact, had boasted at Guy’s of the runs I hoped to have with the hounds; for Duncombe was in a famous hunting district. But all these ideas were quite dispersed when Mr. Morgan led me to the inn-yard, where there was a horse-dealer on his way to a neighbouring fair, and ‘strongly advised me,’ — which in our relative circumstances was equivalent to an injunction, — to purchase a little, useful, fast-trotting, brown cob, instead of a fine showy horse, ‘who would take any fence I put him to,’ as the horse-dealer assured me. Mr. Morgan was evidently pleased when I bowed to his decision, and gave up all hopes of an occasional hunt.

“He opened out a great deal more after this purchase. He told me his plan of establishing me in a house of my own, which looked more respectable, not to say professional, than being in lodgings; and then he went on to say that he had lately lost a friend, a brother surgeon in a neighbouring town, who had left a widow with a small income, who would be very glad to live with me, and act as mistress to my establishment; thus lessening the expense.

“‘She is a lady-like woman,’ said Mr. Morgan, ‘to judge from the little I have seen of her; about forty-five or so; and may really be of some help to you in the little etiquettes of our profession; the slight delicate attentions which every man has to learn, if he wishes to get on in life. This is Mrs. Munton’s,

sir,' said he, stopping short at a very unromantic-looking green door, with a brass knocker.

"I had no time to say, 'Who is Mrs. Munton?' before we had heard Mrs. Munton was at home, and were following the tidy elderly servant up the narrow carpeted stairs into the drawing-room. Mrs. Munton was the widow of a former vicar, upwards of sixty, rather deaf; but like all the deaf people I have ever seen, very fond of talking; perhaps because she then knew the subject, which passed out of her grasp when another began to speak. She was ill of a chronic complaint, which often incapacitated her from going out; and the kind people of the town were in the habit of coming to see her and sit with her, and of bringing her the newest, freshest, tid-bits of news; so that her room was the centre of the gossip of Duncombe;—not of scandal, mind; for I make a distinction between gossip and scandal. Now you can fancy the discrepancy between the ideal and the real Mrs. Munton. Instead of any foolish notion of a beautiful blooming widow, tenderly anxious about the health of the stranger, I saw a homely, talkative, elderly person, with a keen observant eye, and marks of suffering on her face; plain in manner and dress, but still unmistakeably a lady. She talked to Mr. Morgan, but she looked at me; and I saw that nothing I did escaped her notice. Mr. Morgan annoyed me by his anxiety to show me off; but he was kindly anxious to bring out every circumstance to my credit in Mrs. Munton's hearing, knowing well that the town-crier had not more opportunities to publish all about me than she had.

"'What was that remark you repeated to me of Sir Astley Cooper's?' asked he. It had been the most trivial speech in the world that I had named as we walked along, and I felt ashamed of having to repeat it: but it answered Mr. Morgan's purpose, and before night all the town had heard that I was a favourite pupil of Sir Astley's (I had never seen him but twice in my life); and Mr. Morgan was afraid that as soon as he knew my full value I should be retained by Sir Astley to assist him in his duties as surgeon to the Royal Family. Every little

circumstance was pressed into the conversation which could add to my importance.

“‘As I once heard Sir Robert Peel remark to Mr. Harrison, the father of our young friend here — The moons in August are remarkably full and bright.’ — If you remember, Charles, my father was always proud of having sold a pair of gloves to Sir Robert, when he was staying at the Grange, near Biddicombe, and I suppose good Mr. Morgan had paid his only visit to my father at the time; but Mrs. Munton evidently looked at me with double respect after this incidental remark, which I was amused to meet with, a few months afterwards, disguised in the statement that my father was an intimate friend of the Premier’s, and had, in fact, been the adviser of most of the measures taken by him in public life. I sat by, half indignant and half amused. Mr. Morgan looked so complacently pleased at the whole effect of the conversation, that I did not care to mar it by explanations; and, indeed, I had little idea at the time how small sayings were the seeds of great events in the town of Duncombe. When we left Mrs. Munton’s he was in a blandly communicative mood.

“‘You will find it a curious statistical fact, but five-sixths of our householders of a certain rank in Duncombe are women. We have widows and old maids in rich abundance. In fact, my dear sir, I believe that you and I are almost the only gentlemen in the place — Mr. Bullock, of course, excepted. By gentlemen, I mean professional men. It behoves us to remember, sir, that so many of the female sex rely upon us for the kindness and protection which every man who is worthy of the name is always so happy to render.’

“Miss Tomkinson, where we next called, did no strike me as remarkably requiring protection from any man. She was a tall, gaunt, masculine-looking woman, with an air of defiance about her, naturally; this, however, she softened and mitigated, as far as she was able, in favour of Mr. Morgan. He, it seemed to me, stood a little in awe of the lady, who was very *brusque* and plain-spoken, and evidently piqued herself on her decision of character and sincerity of speech.

"So, this is the Mr. Harrison we have heard so much of from you, Mr. Morgan? I must say, from what I had heard, that I had expected something a little more — hum — hum! But he's young yet; he's young. We have been all anticipating an Apollo, Mr. Harrison, from Mr. Morgan's description, and an *Æsculapius* combined in one; or, perhaps I might confine myself to saying Apollo, as he, I believe, was the God of Medicine!"

"How could Mr. Morgan have described me without seeing me? I asked myself.

"Miss Tomkinson put on her spectacles, and adjusted them on her Roman nose. Suddenly relaxing from her severity of inspection, she said to Mr. Morgan — 'But you must see Caroline. I had nearly forgotten it; she is busy with the girls, but I will send for her. She had a bad headache yesterday, and looked very pale; it made me very uncomfortable.'

"She rang the bell and desired the servant to fetch Miss Caroline.

"Miss Caroline was the younger sister — younger by twenty years; and so considered as a child by Miss Tomkinson, who was fifty-five, at the very least. If she was considered as a child, she was also petted and caressed, and cared for as a child; for she had been left as a baby to the charge of her elder sister; and when the father died, and they had to set up a school, Miss Tomkinson took upon herself every difficult arrangement, and denied herself every pleasure, and made every sacrifice in order that 'Carry' might not feel the change in their circumstances. My wife tells me she once knew the sisters purchase a piece of silk, enough, with management, to have made two gowns; but Carry wished for flounces, or some such fal-lals; and, without a word, Miss Tomkinson gave up her gown to have the whole made up as Carry wished, into one handsome one; and wore an old shabby affair herself as cheerfully as if it were Genoa velvet. That tells the sort of relationship between the sisters as well as anything, and I consider myself very good to name it thus early, for it was long before I found out Miss Tomkinson's real goodness; and we had a great quarrel first. Miss Caroline looked

very delicate and die-away when she came in; she was as soft and sentimental as Miss Tomkinson was hard and masculine; and had a way of saying, 'Oh, sister, how can you?' at Miss Tomkinson's startling speeches, which I never liked, — especially as it was accompanied by a sort of protesting look at the company present, as if she wished to have it understood that she was shocked at her sister's *outré* manners. Now, that was not faithful between sisters. A remonstrance in private might have done good, — though, for my own part, I have grown to like Miss Tomkinson's speeches and ways; but I don't like the way some people have of separating themselves from what may be unpopular in their relations. I know I spoke rather shortly to Miss Caroline when she asked me whether I could bear the change from 'the great metropolis' to a little country village. In the first place, why could not she call it 'London,' or 'town,' and have done with it? And in the next place, why should she not love the place that was her home well enough to fancy that every one would like it when they came to know it as well as she did?

"I was conscious I was rather abrupt in my conversation with her, and I saw that Mr. Morgan was watching me, though he pretended to be listening to Miss Tomkinson's whispered account of her sister's symptoms. But when we were once more in the street, he began, 'My dear young friend' —

"I winced; for all the morning I had noticed that when he was going to give a little unpalatable advice, he always began with 'My dear young friend.' He had done so about the horse.

" 'My dear young friend, there are one or two hints I should like to give you about your manner. The great Sir Everard Home used to say, 'a general practitioner should either have a very good manner, or a very bad one.' Now, in the latter case, he must be possessed of talents and acquirements sufficient to insure his being sought after, whatever his manner might be. But the rudeness will give notoriety to these qualifications. Abernethy is a case in point. I rather, myself, question the taste of bad manners. I, therefore, have studied to acquire an

attentive, anxious politeness, which combines ease and grace with a tender regard and interest. I am not aware whether I have succeeded (few men do) in coming up to my ideal; but I recommend you to strive after this manner, peculiarly befitting our profession. Identify yourself with your patients, my dear sir. You have sympathy in your good heart, I am sure, to really feel pain when listening to their account of their sufferings, and it soothes them to see the expression of this feeling in your manner. It is, in fact, sir, manners that make the man in our profession. I don't set myself up as an example, far from it; — but — This is Mr. Hutton's, our vicar; one of the servants is indisposed, and I shall be glad of the opportunity of introducing you. We can resume our conversation at another time.'

"I had not been aware that we had been holding a conversation, in which, I believe, the assistance of two persons is required. Why had not Mr. Hutton sent to ask after my health the evening before, according to the custom of the place? I felt rather offended."

CHAPTER III.

"THE vicarage was on the north side of the street, at the end opening towards the hills. It was a long low house, receding behind its neighbours; a court was between the door and the street, with a flag-walk and an old stone cistern on the right-hand side of the door; Solomon's seal growing under the windows. Some one was watching from behind the window-curtain; for the door opened, as if by magic, as soon as we reached it; and we entered a low room, which served as hall, and was matted all over, with deep old-fashioned window-seats, and Dutch tiles in the fire-place; altogether it was very cool and refreshing, after the hot sun in the white and red street.

"‘Bessy is not so well, Mr. Morgan,’ said the sweet little girl of eleven or so, who had opened the door. ‘Sophy wanted to send for you; but papa said he was sure you would come soon

this morning, and we were to remember that there were other sick people wanting you.'

"'Here's Mr. Morgan, Sophy,' said she, opening the door into an inner room, to which we descended a step, as I remember well,—for I was nearly falling down it, I was so caught by the picture within. It was like a picture,—at least, seen through the door-frame. A sort of mixture of crimson and sea-green in the room, and a sunny garden beyond; a very low casement window, open to the amber air; clusters of white roses peeping in, and Sophy sitting on a cushion on the ground, the light coming from above on her head, and a little sturdy round-eyed brother kneeling by her, to whom she was teaching the alphabet. It was a mighty relief to him when we came in, as I could see; and I am much mistaken if he was easily caught again to say his lesson, when he was once sent off to find papa. Sophy rose quietly, and of course we were just introduced, and that was all, before she took Mr. Morgan upstairs to see her sick servant. I was left to myself in the room. It looked so like a home, that it at once made me know the full charm of the word. There were books and work about, and tokens of employment: there was a child's plaything on the floor; and against the sea-green walls there hung a likeness or two, done in water-colours;—one, I was sure, was that of Sophy's mother. The chairs and sofa were covered with a chintz, the same as the curtains—a little pretty red rose on a white ground. I don't know where the crimson came from, but I am sure there was crimson somewhere; perhaps in the carpet. There was a glass door besides the window, and you went up a step into the garden. This was first, a grass plot, just under the windows, and beyond that, straight gravel walks, with box-borders and narrow flower-beds on each side, most brilliant and gay at the end of August, as it was then; and behind the flower borders were fruit-trees trained over wood-work, so as to shut out the beds of kitchen-garden within.

"While I was looking round, a gentleman came in, who I was sure, was the vicar. It was rather awkward, for I had to account for my presence there.

" 'I came with Mr. Morgan; my name is Harrison,' said I, bowing. I could see he was not much enlightened by this explanation, but we sat down and talked about the time of year, or some such matter, till Sophy and Mr. Morgan came back. Then I saw Mr. Morgan to advantage. With a man whom he respected, as he did the vicar, he lost the prim artificial manner he had in general, and was calm and dignified; but not so dignified as the vicar. I never saw any one like him. He was very quiet and reserved, almost absent at times; his personal appearance was not striking; but he was altogether a man you would talk to with your hat off wherever you met him. It was his character that produced this effect — character that he never thought about, but that appeared in every word, and look, and motion.

" 'Sophy,' said he, 'Mr. Morgan looks very warm; could you not gather a few jargonelle pears off the south wall? I fancy there are some ripe there. Our jargonelle pears are remarkably early this year.'

" Sophy went into the sunny garden, and I saw her take a rake and tilt at the pears, which were above her reach, apparently. The parlour had become chilly (I found out afterwards it had a flag floor, which accounts for its coldness), and I thought I should like to go into the warm sun. I said I would go and help the young lady; and without waiting for an answer, I went into the warm, scented garden, where the bees were rifling the flowers, and making a continual busy sound. I think Sophy had begun to despair of getting the fruit, and was glad of my assistance. I thought I was very senseless to have knocked them down so soon, when I found we were to go in as soon as they were gathered. I should have liked to have walked round the garden, but Sophy walked straight off with the pears, and I could do nothing but follow her. She took up her needle-work while we ate them: they were very soon finished, and when the vicar had ended his conversation with Mr. Morgan about some poor people, we rose up to come away. I was thankful that Mr. Morgan had said so little about me. I could not have endured that he should have introduced Sir Astley Cooper or

Sir Robert Peel at the vicarage; nor yet could I have brooked much mention of my 'great opportunities for acquiring a thorough knowledge of my profession,' which I had heard him describe to Miss Tomkinson, while her sister was talking to me. Luckily, however, he spared me all this at the vicar's. When we left, it was time to mount our horses and go the country rounds, and I was glad of it."

CHAPTER IV.

"BY-AND-BY the inhabitants of Duncombe began to have parties in my honour. Mr. Morgan told me it was on my account, or I don't think I should have found it out. But he was pleased at every fresh invitation, and rubbed his hands, and chuckled, as if it was a compliment to himself, as in truth it was.

"Meanwhile, the arrangement with Mrs. Rose had been brought to a conclusion. She was to bring her furniture, and place it in a house, of which I was to pay the rent. She was to be the mistress, and in return, she was not to pay anything for her board. Mr. Morgan took the house, and delighted in advising, and settling all my affairs. I was partly indolent, and partly amused, and was altogether passive. The house he took for me was near his own: it had two sitting-rooms down-stairs, opening into each other by folding-doors, which were, however, kept shut in general. The back room was my consulting room ('the library,' he advised me to call it), and gave me a skull to put on the top of my bookcase, in which the medical books were all ranged on the conspicuous shelves; while Miss Austen, Dickens, and Thackeray were, by Mr. Morgan himself, skilfully placed in a careless way, upside down, or with their backs turned to the wall. The front parlour was to be the dining-room, and the room above was furnished with Mrs. Rose's drawing-room chairs and table, though I found she preferred sitting downstairs in the dining-room, close to the window, where, between every stitch, she could look up and see what was going on in the street. I felt rather queer to be the master

of this house, filled with another person's furniture, before I had even seen the lady whose property it was.

"Presently she arrived. Mr. Morgan met her at the inn where the coach stopped, and accompanied her to my house. I could see them out of the drawing-room window, the little gentleman stepping daintily along, flourishing his cane, and evidently talking away. She was a little taller than he was, and in deep widow's mourning; such veils and falls, and capes and cloaks, that she looked like a black crape haycock. When we were introduced, she put up her thick^{*} veil, and looked around, and sighed.

"'Your appearance and circumstances, Mr. Harrison, remind me forcibly of the time when I was married to my dear husband, now at rest. He was then, like you, commencing practice as a surgeon. For twenty years I sympathised with him, and assisted him by every means in my power, even to making up pills when the young man was out. May we live together in like harmony for an equal length of time! May the regard between us be equally sincere, although, instead of being conjugal, it is to be maternal and filial!'

"I am sure she had been concocting this speech in the coach, for she afterwards told me she was the only passenger. When she had ended, I felt as if I ought to have had a glass of wine in my hand to drink, after the manner of toasts. And yet I doubt if I should have done it heartily, for I did not hope to live with her for twenty years; it had rather a dreary sound. However, I only bowed, and kept my thoughts to myself. I asked Mr. Morgan, while Mrs. Rose was up-stairs taking off her things, to stay to tea; to which he agreed, and kept rubbing his hands with satisfaction, saying —

"'Very fine woman, sir; very fine woman! And what a manner! How she will receive patients, who may wish to leave a message during your absence! Such a flow of words to be sure!'

"Mr. Morgan could not stay long after tea, as there were one or two cases to be seen. I would willingly have gone, and had my hat on, indeed, for the purpose, when he said it would

not be respectful, 'not the thing,' to leave Mrs. Rose the first evening of her arrival.

"Tender deference to the sex, — to a widow in the first months of her loneliness, — requires this little consideration, my dear sir. I will leave that case at Miss Tomkinson's for you; you will perhaps call early to-morrow morning. Miss Tomkinson is rather particular, and is apt to speak plainly if she does not think herself properly attended to."

"I had often noticed that he shuffled off the visits to Miss Tomkinson's on me, and I suspect he was a little afraid of the lady.

"It was rather a long evening with Mrs. Rose. She had nothing to do, thinking it civil, I suppose, to stop in the parlour, and not go up-stairs and unpack. I begged I might be no restraint upon her if she wished to do so; but (rather to my disappointment) she smiled in a measured, subdued way, and said it would be a pleasure to her to become better acquainted with me. She went up-stairs once, and my heart misgave me when I saw her come down with a clean folded pocket-handkerchief. Oh, my prophetic soul! — she was no sooner seated, than she began to give me an account of her late husband's illness, and symptoms, and death. It was a very common case, but she evidently seemed to think it had been peculiar. She had just a smattering of medical knowledge, and used the technical terms so very *mal à propos* that I could hardly keep from smiling; but I would not have done it for the world, she was evidently in such deep and sincere distress. At last she said —

"I have the 'dognoises' of my dear husband's complaint in my desk, Mr. Harrison, if you would like to draw up the case for the 'Lancet.' I think he would have felt gratified, poor fellow, if he had been told such a compliment would be paid to his remains, and that his case should appear in those distinguished columns."

"It was rather awkward; for the case was of the very commonest, as I said before. However, I had not been even this short time in practice without having learnt a few of those

noises which do not compromise one, and yet may bear a very significant construction if the listener chooses to exert a little imagination.

"Before the end of the evening, we were such friends that she brought me down the late Mr. Rose's picture to look at. She told me she could not bear, herself, to gaze upon the beloved features; but that if I would look upon the miniature, she would avert her face. I offered to take it into my own hands, but she seemed wounded at the proposal, and said she never, never could trust such a treasure out of her own possession; so she turned her head very much over her left shoulder, while I examined the likeness held by her extended right arm.

"The late Mr. Rose must have been rather a good-looking jolly man; and the artist had given him such a broad smile, and such a twinkle about the eyes, that it really was hard to help smiling back at him. However, I restrained myself.

"At first Mrs. Rose objected to accepting any of the invitations which were sent her to accompany me to the tea-parties in the town. She was so good and simple, that I was sure she had no other reason than the one which she alleged — the short time that had elapsed since her husband's death; or else, now that I had had some experience of the entertainments which she declined so pertinaciously, I might have suspected that she was glad of the excuse. I used sometimes to wish that I was a widow. I came home tired from a hard day's riding, and if I had but felt sure that Mr. Morgan would not come in, I should certainly have put on my slippers and my loose morning coat, and have indulged in a cigar in the garden. It seemed a cruel sacrifice to society to dress myself in tight boots, and a stiff coat, and go to a five o'clock tea. But Mr. Morgan read me such lectures upon the necessity of cultivating the good-will of the people among whom I was settled, and seemed so sorry, and almost hurt, when I once complained of the dulness of these parties, that I felt I could not be so selfish as to decline more than one out of three. Mr. Morgan, if he found that I had an invitation for the evening, would often take the longer round, and the more distant visits. I suspected him at first of

the design, which I confess I often entertained, of shirking the parties; but I soon found out he was really making a sacrifice of his inclinations for what he considered to be my advantage."

CHAPTER V.

"**T**HREE was one invitation which seemed to promise a good deal of pleasure. Mr. Bullock (who is the attorney of Duncombe) was married a second time to a lady from a large provincial town; she wished to lead the fashion, — a thing very easy to do, for every one was willing to follow her. So instead of giving a tea-party in my honour, she proposed a pic-nic to some old hall in the neighbourhood; and really the arrangements sounded tempting enough. Every patient we had seemed full of the subject; both those who were invited and those who were not. There was a moat round the house, with a boat on it; and there was a gallery in the hall, from which music sounded delightfully. The family to whom the place belonged were abroad, and lived at a newer and grander mansion when they were at home; there were only a farmer and his wife in the old hall, and they were to have the charge of the preparations. The little, kind-hearted town was delighted when the sun shone bright on the October morning of our pic-nic; the shopkeepers and cottagers all looked pleased as they saw the cavalcade gathering at Mr. Bullock's door. We were somewhere about twenty in number; a 'silent few,' she called us; but I thought we were quite enough. There were the Miss Tomkinsons, and two of their young ladies — one of them belonged to a 'county family,' Mrs. Bullock told me in a whisper; then came Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Bullock, and a tribe of little children, the offspring of the present wife. Miss Bullock was only a step-daughter. Mrs. Munton had accepted the invitation to join our party, which was rather unexpected by the host and hostess, I imagine, from little remarks that I overheard; but they made her very welcome. Miss Horsman (a maiden lady who had been on a visit from home till last week) was another. And last, there were the vicar and his children. These, with Mr. Morgan and myself,

made up the party. I was very much pleased to see something more of the vicar's family. He had come in occasionally to the evening parties, it is true; and spoken kindly to us all; but it was not his habit to stay very long at them. And his daughter was, he said, too young to visit. She had had the charge of her little sisters and brother since her mother's death, which took up a good deal of her time, and she was glad of the evenings to pursue her own studies. But to-day the case was different; and Sophy, and Helen, and Lizzie, and even little Walter, were all there, standing at Mrs. Bullock's door; for we none of us could be patient enough to sit still in the parlour with Mrs. Munton and the elder ones, quietly waiting for the two chaises and the spring-cart, which were to have been there by two o'clock, and now it was nearly a quarter past. 'Shameful! the brightness of the day would be gone.' The sympathetic shopkeepers standing at their respective doors with their hands in their pockets, had, one and all, their heads turned in the direction from which the carriages (as Mrs. Bullock called them) were to come. There was a rumble along the paved street; and the shopkeepers turned and smiled, and bowed their heads congratulatingly to us; all the mothers and all the little children of the place stood clustering round the doors to see us set off. I had my horse waiting; and, meanwhile, I assisted people into their vehicles. One sees a good deal of management on such occasions. Mrs. Munton was handed first into one of the chaises; then there was a little hanging back, for most of the young people wished to go in the cart, — I don't know why. Miss Horsman, however, came forward, and as she was known to be the intimate friend of Mrs. Munton, so far was satisfactory. But who was to be third? — bodkin with two old ladies, who liked the windows shut? I saw Sophy speaking to Helen; and then she came forward and offered to be the third. The two old ladies looked pleased and glad (as every one did near Sophy); so that chaise-full was arranged. Just as it was going off, however, the servant from the vicarage came running with a note for her master. When he had read it, he went to the chaise-door, and I suppose told Sophy, what I afterwards heard him

say to Mrs. Bullock, that the clergyman of a neighbouring parish was ill, and unable to read the funeral service for one of his parishioners, who was to be buried that afternoon. The vicar was, of course, obliged to go, and said he should not return home that night. It seemed a relief to some, I perceived, to be without the little restraint of his dignified presence. Mr. Morgan came up just at the moment, having ridden hard all the morning to be in time to join our party; so we were resigned, on the whole, to the vicar's absence. His own family regretted him the most, I noticed, and I liked them all the better for it. I believe that I came next in being sorry for his departure; but I respected and admired him, and felt always the better for having been in his company. Miss Tomkinson, Mrs. Bullock, and the 'county' young lady, were in the next chaise. I think the last would rather have been in the cart with the younger and merrier set, but I imagine that was considered *infra dig.* The remainder of the party were to ride and tie; and a most riotous laughing set they were. Mr. Morgan and I were on horseback; at least I led my horse, with little Walter riding on him; his fat, sturdy legs standing stiff out on each side of my cob's broad back. He was a little darling, and chattered all the way, his sister Sophy being the heroine of all his stories. I found he owed this day's excursion entirely to her begging papa to let him come; nurse was strongly against it — 'cross old nurse!' he called her once, and then said, 'No, not cross; kind nurse; Sophy tells Walter not to say cross nurse.' I never saw so young a child so brave. The horse shied at a log of wood. Walter looked very red, and grasped the mane, but sat upright like a little man, and never spoke all the time the horse was dancing. When it was over he looked at me, and smiled —

" 'You would not let me be hurt, Mr. Harrison, would you?' He was the most winning little fellow I ever saw.

"There were frequent cries to me from the cart, 'Oh, Mr. Harrison! do get us that branch of blackberries; you can reach it with your whip handle?' — 'Oh, Mr. Harrison! there were such splendid nuts on the other side of that hedge; would you just turn back for them?' Miss Caroline Tomkinson was once

or twice rather faint with the motion of the cart, and asked me for my smelling-bottle, as she had forgotten hers. I was amused at the idea of my carrying such articles about with me. Then she thought she should like to walk, and got out, and came on my side of the road; but I found little Walter the pleasanter companion, and soon set the horse off into a trot, with which pace her tender constitution could not keep up.

"The road to the old hall was along a sandy lane, with high hedge-banks; the wych-elms almost met over-head. 'Shocking farming!' Mr. Bullock called out; and so it might be, but it was very pleasant and picturesque looking. The trees were gorgeous, in their orange and crimson hues, varied by great dark green holly bushes, glistening in the autumn sun. I should have thought the colours too vivid, if I had seen them in a picture, especially when we wound up the brow, after crossing the little bridge over the brook — (what laughing and screaming there was as the cart splashed through the sparkling water!) — and I caught the purple hills beyond. We could see the old hall, too, from that point, with its warm rich woods billowing up behind, and the blue waters of the moat lying still under the sunlight.

"Laughing and talking is very hungry work, and there was a universal petition for dinner when we arrived at the lawn before the hall, where it had been arranged that we were to dine. I saw Miss Carry take Miss Tomkinson aside, and whisper to her; and presently the elder sister came up to me, where I was busy, rather apart, making a seat of hay, which I had fetched from the farmer's loft for my little friend Walter, who, I had noticed, was rather hoarse, and for whom I was afraid of a seat on the grass, dry as it appeared to be.

"'Mr. Harrison, Caroline tells me she has been feeling very faint, and she is afraid of a return of one of her attacks. She says she has more confidence in your medical powers than in Mr. Morgan's. I should not be sincere if I did not say that I differ from her; but as it is so, may I beg you to keep an eye upon her? I tell her she had better not have come if she did not feel well; but, poor girl, she had set her heart upon this day's

pleasure. I have offered to go home with her; but she says, if she can only feel sure you are at hand, she would rather stay.'

"Of course, I bowed, and promised all due attendance on Miss Caroline; and in the mean time, until she did require my services, I thought I might as well go and help the vicar's daughter, who looked so fresh and pretty in her white muslin dress, here, there, and everywhere, now in the sunshine, now in the green shade, helping every one to be comfortable, and thinking of every one but herself.

"Presently Mr. Morgan came up.

"Miss Caroline does not feel quite well. I have promised your services to her sister.'

"So have I, sir. But Miss Sophy cannot carry this heavy basket.'

"I did not mean her to have heard this excuse; but she caught it up and said —

"Oh, yes I can! I can take the things out one by one. Go to poor Miss Caroline, pray, Mr. Harrison.'

"I went; but very unwillingly, I must say. When I had once seated myself by her, I think she must have felt better. It was, probably, only a nervous fear, which was relieved when she knew she had assistance near at hand; for she made a capital dinner. I thought she would never end her modest requests for 'just a little more pigeon-pie, or a merry-thought of chicken.' Such a hearty meal would, I hoped, effectually revive her, — and so it did; for she told me she thought she could manage to walk round the garden, and see the old peacock yews, if I would kindly give her my arm. It was very provoking; I had so set my heart upon being with the vicar's children. I advised Miss Caroline strongly to lie down a little, and rest before tea, on the sofa in the farmer's kitchen; you cannot think how persuasively I begged her to take care of herself. At last she consented, thanking me for my tender interest; she should never forget my kind attention to her. She little knew what was in my mind at the time. However, she was safely consigned to the farmer's wife, and I was rushing out in search of a white gown and a waving figure, when I encountered Mrs. Bullock at the

door of the Hall. She was a fine, fierce-looking woman. I thought she had appeared a little displeased at my (unwilling) attentions to Miss Caroline at dinner-time; but now, seeing me alone, she was all smiles.

“‘Oh, Mr. Harrison, all alone! How is that? What are the young ladies about to allow such churlishness? And, by the way, I have left a young lady who will be very glad of your assistance, I am sure—my daughter, Jemima (her step-daughter, she meant). Mr. Bullock is so particular, and so tender a father, that he would be frightened to death at the idea of her going into the boat on the moat unless she was with some one who could swim. He is gone to discuss the new wheel-plough with the farmer—(you know agriculture is his hobby, although law, horrid law, is his business). But the poor girl is pining on the bank, longing for my permission to join the others, which I dare not give, unless you will kindly accompany her, and promise, if any accident happens, to preserve her safe.’

“‘Oh, Sophy, why was no one anxious about you?’”

CHAPTER VI.

“MISS BULLOCK was standing by the water-side, looking wistfully, as I thought, at the water-party; the sound of whose merry laughter came pleasantly enough from the boat, which lay off (for, indeed, no one knew how to row, and she was of a clumsy flat-bottomed build,) about a hundred yards, ‘weather-bound,’ as they shouted out, among the long stalks of the water-lilies.

“Miss Bullock did not look up till I came close to her; and then, when I told her my errand, she lifted up her great heavy, sad eyes, and looked at me for a moment. It struck me, at the time, that she expected to find some expression on my face which was not there, and that its absence was a relief to her. She was a very pale, unhappy-looking girl, but very quiet, and, if not agreeable in manner, at any rate not forward or offensive. I called to the party in the boat, and they came slowly enough through the large, cool, green lily-leaves towards us. When

they got near, we saw there was no room for us, and Miss Bullock said she would rather stay in the meadow and saunter about, if I would go into the boat; and I am certain from the look on her countenance that she spoke the truth; but Miss Horsman called out in a sharp voice, while she smiled in a very disagreeable knowing way,

“ ‘Oh, mamma will be displeased if you don’t come in, Miss Bullock, after all her trouble in making such a nice arrangement.’

“At this speech the poor girl hesitated, and at last, in an undecided way, as if she was not sure whether she was doing right, she took Sophy’s place in the boat. Helen and Lizzie landed with their sister, so that there was plenty of room for Miss Tomkinson, Miss Horsman, and all the little Bullocks; and the three vicarage girls went off strolling along the meadow side, and playing with Walter who was in a high state of excitement. The sun was getting low, but the declining light was beautiful upon the water; and, to add to the charm of the time, Sophy and her sisters, standing on the green lawn, in front of the hall, struck up the little German canon, which I had never heard before,—

‘Oh wie wohl ist mir am Abend,’ &c.

At last we were summoned to tug the boat to the landing-steps on the lawn, tea and a blazing wood fire being ready for us in the hall. I was offering my arm to Miss Horsman, as she was a little lame, when she said again, in her peculiar disagreeable way, ‘Had you not better take Miss Bullock, Mr. Harrison? It will be more satisfactory.’

“I helped Miss Horsman up the steps, however, and then she repeated her advice; so, remembering that Miss Bullock was in fact the daughter of my entertainers, I went to her; but though she accepted my arm, I could perceive she was sorry that I had offered it.

“The hall was lighted by the glorious wood fire in the wide old grate; the daylight was dying away in the west; and the large windows admitted but little of what was left, through

their small leaded frames, with coats of arms emblazoned upon them. The farmer's wife had set out a great long table, which was piled with good things; and a huge black kettle sang on the glowing fire, which sent a cheerful warmth through the room as it crackled and blazed. Mr. Morgan (who I found had been taking a little round in the neighbourhood among his patients) was there smiling and rubbing his hands as usual. Mr. Bullock was holding a conversation with the farmer at the garden door on the nature of different manures, in which it struck me that if Mr. Bullock had the fine names and the theories on his side, the farmer had all the practical knowledge and the experience, and I know which I would have trusted. I think Mr. Bullock rather liked to talk about Liebig in my hearing; it sounded well, and was knowing. Mrs. Bullock was not particularly placid in her mood. In the first place, I wanted to sit by the vicar's daughter, and Miss Caroline as decidedly wanted to sit on my other side, being afraid of her fainting fits, I imagine. But Mrs. Bullock called me to a place near her daughter. Now I thought I had done enough civility to a girl who was evidently annoyed rather than pleased by my attentions, and I pretended to be busy stooping under the table for Miss Caroline's gloves, which were missing; but it was of no avail; Mrs. Bullock's fine severe eyes were awaiting my re-appearance, and she summoned me again.

“‘I am keeping this place on my right hand for you, Mr. Harrison. Jemima; sit still!’

“I went up to the post of honour and tried to busy myself with pouring out coffee to hide my chagrin; but after forgetting to empty the water put in (‘to warm the cups,’ Mrs. Bullock said), and omitting to add any sugar, the lady told me she would dispense with my services, and turn me over to my neighbour on the other side.

“‘Talking to the younger lady was, no doubt, more Mr. Harrison's vocation than assisting the elder one.’ I dare say it was only the manner that made the words seem offensive. Miss Horsman sat opposite to me, smiling away. Miss Bullock did not speak, but seemed more depressed than ever. At length

Miss Horsman and Mrs. Bullock got to a war of inuendoes, which were completely unintelligible to me; and I was very much displeased with my situation. While at the bottom of the table, Mr. Morgan and Mr. Bullock were making the young ones laugh most heartily. Part of the joke was Mr. Morgan's insisting upon making tea at that end; and Sophy and Helen were busy contriving every possible mistake for him. I thought honour was a very good thing, but merriment a better. Here was I in the place of distinction, hearing nothing but cross words. At last the time came for us to go home. As the evening was damp, the seats in the chaises were the best and most to be desired.—And now Sophy offered to go in the cart; only she seemed anxious, and so was I, that Walter should be secured from the effects of the white wreaths of fog rolling up from the valley; but the little violent, affectionate fellow would not be separated from Sophy. She made a nest for him on her knee in one corner of the cart, and covered him with her own shawl; and I hoped that he would take no harm. Miss Tomkinson, Mr. Bullock, and some of the young ones walked; but I seemed chained to the windows of the chaise, for Miss Caroline begged me not to leave her, as she was dreadfully afraid of robbers; and Mrs. Bullock implored me to see that the man did not overturn them in the bad roads, as he had certainly had too much to drink.

“I became so irritable before I reached home, that I thought it was the most disagreeable day of pleasure I had ever had, and could hardly bear to answer Mrs. Rose's never-ending questions. She told me, however, that from my account the day was so charming that she thought she should relax in the rigour of her seclusion, and mingle a little more in the society of which I gave so tempting a description. She really thought her dear Mr. Rose would have wished it; and his will should be law to her after his death, as it had ever been during his life. In compliance, therefore, with his wishes, she would even do a little violence to her own feelings.

“She was very good and kind; not merely attentive to everything which she thought could conduce to my comfort, but

willing to take any trouble in providing the broths and nourishing food which I often found it convenient to order, under the name of kitchen-physic, for my poorer patients; and I really did not see the use of her shutting herself up, in mere compliance with an etiquette, when she began to wish to mix in the little quiet society of Duncombe. Accordingly I urged her to begin to visit, and even when applied to as to what I imagined the late Mr. Rose's wishes on that subject would have been, answered for that worthy gentleman, and assured his widow that I was convinced he would have regretted deeply her giving way to immoderate grief, and would have been rather grateful than otherwise at seeing her endeavour to divert her thoughts by a few quiet visits. She cheered up, and said, 'as I really thought so, she would sacrifice her own inclinations, and accept the very next invitation that came.'

CHAPTER VII.

"I WAS roused from my sleep in the middle of the night by a messenger from the vicarage. Little Walter had got the croup, and Mr. Morgan had been sent for into the country. I dressed myself hastily, and went through the quiet little street. There was a light burning upstairs at the vicarage. It was in the nursery. The servant, who opened the door the instant I knocked, was crying sadly, and could hardly answer my inquiries as I went up stairs, two steps at a time, to see my little favourite.

"The nursery was a great large room. At the farther end it was lighted by a common candle, which left the other end, where the door was, in shade, so I suppose the nurse did not see me come in, for she was speaking very crossly.

"'Miss Sophy!' said she, 'I told you over and over again it was not fit for him to go, with the hoarseness that he had, and you would take him. It will break your papa's heart, I know; but it's none of my doing.'

"Whatever Sophy felt, she did not speak in answer to this. She was on her knees by the warm bath, in which the little

fellow was struggling to get his breath, with a look of terror on his face that I have often noticed in young children when smitten by a sudden and violent illness. It seems as if they recognised something infinite and invisible, at whose bidding the pain and the anguish come, from which no love can shield them. It is a very heart-rending look to observe, because it comes on the faces of those who are too young to receive comfort from the words of faith, or the promises of religion. Walter had his arms tight round Sophy's neck, as if she, hitherto his paradise-angel, could save him from the dread shadow of Death. Yes! of Death! I knelt down by him on the other side, and examined him. The very robustness of his little frame gave violence to the disease, which is always one of the most fearful by which children of his age can be attacked.

“‘Don’t tremble, Watty,’ said Sophy, in a soothing tone; ‘it’s Mr. Harrison, darling, who let you ride on his horse.’ I could detect the quivering in the voice, which she tried to make so calm and soft to quiet the little fellow’s fears. We took him out of the bath, and I went for leeches. While I was away, Mr. Morgan came. He loved the vicarage children as if he were their uncle; but he stood still and aghast at the sight of Walter, — so lately bright and strong, — and now hurrying alone to the awful change, — to the silent mysterious land, where, tended and cared for as he had been on earth, he must go — alone. The little fellow! the darling!

“We applied the leeches to his throat. He resisted at first; but Sophy, God bless her, put the agony of her grief on one side, and thought only of him, and began to sing the little songs he loved. We were all still. The gardener had gone to fetch the vicar; but he was twelve miles off, and we doubted if he would come in time. I don’t know if they had any hope; but the first moment Mr. Morgan’s eyes met mine, I saw that he, like me, had none. The ticking of the house-clock sounded through the dark quiet house. Walter was sleeping now, with the black leeches yet hanging to his fair, white throat. Still Sophy went on singing little lullabies, which she had sung under far different and happier circumstances. I remember

one verse, because it struck me at the time as strangely applicable.

'Sleep, baby, sleep!
Thy rest shall angels keep;
While on the grass the lamb shall feed,
And never suffer want or need.'

Sleep, baby, sleep.'

The tears were in Mr. Morgan's eyes. I do not think either he or I could have spoken in our natural tones; but the brave girl went on, clear though low. She stopped at last, and looked up.

"'He is better, is he not, Mr. Morgan?'

"'No, my dear. He is — ahem' — he could not speak all at once. Then he said — 'My dear! he will be better soon. Think of your mamma, my dear Miss Sophy. She will be very thankful to have one of her darlings safe with her, where she is.'

"Still she did not cry. But she bent her head down on the little face, and kissed it long, and tenderly.

"'I will go for Helen and Lizzie. They will be sorry not to see him again.' She rose up and went for them. Poor girls, they came in in their dressing-gowns, with eyes dilated with sudden emotion, pale with terror, stealing softly along, as if sound could disturb him. Sophy comforted them by gentle caresses. It was over soon.

"Mr. Morgan was fairly crying like a child. But he thought it necessary to apologise to me, for what I honoured him for. 'I am a little overdone by yesterday's work, sir. I have had one or two bad nights, and they rather upset me. When I was your age I was as strong and manly as any one, and would have scorned to shed tears.'

"Sophy came up to where we stood.

"Mr. Morgan! I am so sorry for papa. How shall I tell him?' She was struggling against her own grief for her father's sake. Mr. Morgan offered to await his coming home; and she seemed thankful for the proposal. I, new friend, almost stranger, might stay no longer. The street was as quiet as ever; not a shadow was changed; for it was not yet four o'clock. But during the night a soul had departed.

"From all I could see, and all I could learn, the vicar and

his daughter strove which should comfort the other the most. Each thought of the other's grief, — each prayed for the other rather than for themselves. We saw them walking out, countrywards; and we heard of them in the cottages of the poor. But it was some time before I happened to meet either of them again. And then I felt, from something indescribable in their manner towards me, that I was one of the

‘Peculiar people, whom Death had made dear.’

That one day at the old hall had done this. I was, perhaps, the last person who had given the little fellow any unusual pleasure. Poor Walter! I wish I could have done more to make his short life happy!

CHAPTER VIII.

“THERE was a little lull, out of respect to the Vicar's grief, in the visiting. It gave time to Mrs. Rose to soften down the anguish of her weeds.

“At Christmas, Miss Tomkinson sent out invitations for a party. Miss Caroline had once or twice apologised to me because such an event had not taken place before; but, as she said, ‘the avocations of their daily life prevented their having such little *réunions* except in the vacations.’ And, sure enough, as soon as the holidays began, came the civil little note:

“‘The Misses Tomkinson request the pleasure of Mrs. Rose's and Mr. Harrison's company at tea, on the evening of Monday, the 23rd inst. Tea at five o'clock.’

“Mrs. Rose's spirit roused, like a war-horse at the sound of the trumpet, at this. She was not of a repining disposition, but I do think she believed the party-giving population of Duncombe had given up inviting her, as soon as she had determined to relent, and accept the invitations, in compliance with the late Mr. Rose's wishes.

“Such snippings of white love-ribbon as I found everywhere, making the carpet untidy! One day, too, unluckily, a small box was brought to me by mistake. I did not look at the direc-

tion, for I never doubted it was some *hyoscyamus* which I was expecting from London; so I tore it open, and saw inside a piece of paper, with 'No more gray hair,' in large letters, upon it. I folded it up in a hurry, and sealed it afresh, and gave it to Mrs. Rose; but I could not refrain from asking her, soon after, if she could recommend me anything to keep my hair from turning gray, adding that I thought prevention was better than cure. I think she made out the impression of my seal on the paper after that; for I learned that she had been crying, and that she talked about there being no sympathy left in the world for her since Mr. Rose's death; and that she counted the days until she could rejoin him in the better world. I think she counted the days to Miss Tomkinson's party, too; she talked so much about it.

"The covers were taken off Miss Tomkinson's chairs, and curtains, and sofas; and a great jar full of artificial flowers was placed in the centre of the table, which, as Miss Caroline told me, was all her doing, as she doated on the beautiful and artistic in life. Miss Tomkinson stood, erect as a grenadier, close to the door, receiving her friends, and heartily shaking them by the hands as they entered: she said she was truly glad to see them. And so she really was.

"We had just finished tea, and Miss Caroline had brought out a little pack of conversation cards — sheaves of slips of card-board, with intellectual or sentimental questions on one set, and equally intellectual and sentimental answers on the other; and as the answers were fit to any and all the questions, you may think they were a characterless and 'wersh' set of things. I had just been asked by Miss Caroline,

"Can you tell what those dearest to you think of you at this present time?" and had answered,

"How can you expect me to reveal such a secret to the present company!" when the servant announced that a gentleman, a friend of mine, wished to speak to me down-stairs.

"*"Oh, show him up, Martha, show him up!"* said Miss Tomkinson, in her hospitality.

“Any friend of our friend's is welcome,” said Miss Caroline, in an insinuating tone.

“I jumped up, however, thinking it might be some one on business; but I was so penned in by the spider-legged tables, stuck out on every side, that I could not make the haste I wished; and before I could prevent it, Martha had shown up Jack Marshland, who was on his road home for a day or two at Christmas.

“He came up in a hearty way, bowing to Miss Tomkinson, and explaining that he had found himself in my neighbourhood, and had come over to pass a night with me, and that my servant had directed him where I was.

“His voice, loud at all times, sounded like Stentor's, in that little room, where we all spoke in a kind of purring way. He had no swell in his tones; they were *forte* from the beginning. At first it seemed like the days of my youth come back again, to hear full manly speaking; I felt proud of my friend, as he thanked Miss Tomkinson for her kindness in asking him to stay the evening. By-and-bye he came up to me, and I dare say he thought he had lowered his voice, for he looked as if speaking confidentially, while in fact the whole room might have heard him.

“‘Frank, my boy, when shall we have dinner at this good old lady's? I'm deuced hungry.’

“Dinner! Why, we had had tea an hour ago. While he yet spoke, Martha came in with a little tray, on which was a single cup of coffee and three slices of wafer bread-and-butter. His dismay, and his evident submission to the decrees of Fate, tickled me so much, that I thought he should have a further taste of the life I led from month's end to month's end, and I gave up my plan of taking him home at once, and enjoyed the anticipation of the hearty laugh we should have together at the end of the evening. I was famously punished for my determination.

“‘Shall we continue our game?’ asked Miss Caroline, who had never relinquished her sheaf of questions.

"We went on questioning and answering, with little gain of information to either party.

"'No such thing as heavy betting in this game, eh Frank?' asked Jack, who had been watching us. 'You don't lose ten pounds at a sitting, I guess, as you used to do at Short's. Playing for love, I suppose you call it.'

"Miss Caroline simpered, and looked down. Jack was not thinking of her. He was thinking of the days we had had at the Mermaid. Suddenly he said, 'Where were you this day last year, Frank?'

"'I don't remember!' said I.

"'Then I'll tell you. It's the 23rd — the day you were taken up for knocking down the fellow in Long-acre, and that I had to bail you out ready for Christmas-day. You are in more agreeable quarters to-night.'

"He did not intend this reminiscence to be heard, but was not in the least put out when Miss Tomkinson, with a face of dire surprise, asked,

"'Mr. Harrison taken up, sir?'

"'Oh, yes, ma'am; and you see it was so common an affair with him to be locked up that he can't remember the dates of his different imprisonments.'

"He laughed heartily; and so should I, but that I saw the impression it made. The thing was, in fact, simple enough, and capable of easy explanation. I had been made angry by seeing a great hulking fellow, out of mere wantonness, break the crutch from under a cripple; and I struck the man more violently than I intended, and down he went, yelling out for the police, and I had to go before the magistrate to be released. I disdained giving this explanation at the time. It was no business of theirs what I had been doing a year ago; but still Jack might have held his tongue. However, that unruly member of his was set a-going, and he told me afterwards he was resolved to let the old ladies into a little of life; and accordingly he remembered every practical joke we had ever had, and talked and laughed, and roared again. It tried to converse with Miss

Caroline — Mrs. Munton — any one; but Jack was the hero of the evening, and every one was listening to him.

“‘Then he has never sent any hoaxing letters since he came here, has he? Good boy! He has turned over a new leaf. He was the deepest dog at that I ever met with. Such anonymous letters as he used to send! Do you remember that to Mrs. Walbrook, eh Frank? That was too bad!’ (the wretch was laughing all the time) ‘No; I won’t tell about it — don’t be afraid. Such a shameful hoax!’ (laughing again.)

“‘Pray do tell,’ I called out; for he made it seem far worse than it was.

“‘Oh no, no; you’ve established a better character — I would not for the world nip your budding efforts. We’ll bury the past in oblivion.’

“I tried to tell my neighbours the story to which he alluded; but they were attracted by the merriment of Jack’s manner, and did not care to hear the plain matter of fact.

“Then came a pause; Jack was talking almost quietly to Miss Horsman. Suddenly he called across the room — ‘How many times have you been out with the hounds? The hedges were blind very late this year, but you must have had some good mild days since.’

“‘I have never been out,’ said I, shortly.

“‘Never! — whew —! Why I thought that was the great attraction to Duncombe.’

“Now was not he provoking? He would condole with me, and fixed the subject in the minds of every one present.

“The supper-trays were brought in, and there was a shuffling of situations. He and I were close together again.

“‘I say, Frank, what will you lay me that I don’t clear that tray before people are ready for their second helping? I’m as hungry as a hound.’

“‘You shall have a round of beef and a raw leg of mutton when we get home. Only do behave yourself here.’

“‘Well, for your sake; but keep me away from those trays, or I’ll not answer for myself “Hould me, or I’ll fight,” as

the Irishman said. I'll go and talk to that little old lady in blue, and sit with my back to those ghosts of eatables.'

"He sat down by Miss Caroline, who would not have liked his description of her; and began an earnest, tolerably quiet conversation. I tried to be as agreeable as I could, to do away with the impression he had given of me; but I found that every one drew up a little stiffly at my approach, and did not encourage me to make many remarks.

"In the middle of my attempts, I heard Miss Caroline beg Jack to take a glass of wine, and I saw him help himself to what appeared to be port; but in an instant he set it down from his lips, exclaiming 'Vinegar, by Jove!' He made the most horribly wry face; and Miss Tomkinson came up in a severe hurry to investigate the affair. It turned out it was some black currant wine, on which she particularly piqued herself; I drank two glasses of it to ingratiate myself with her, and can testify to its sourness. I don't think she noticed my exertions, she was so much engrossed in listening to Jack's excuses for his *mal à propos* observation. He told her with the gravest face that he had been a teetotaller so long that he had but a confused recollection of the distinction between wine and vinegar, particularly eschewing the latter, because it had been twice fermented; and that he had imagined Miss Caroline had asked him to take toast-and-water, or he should never have touched the decanter.

CHAPTER IX.

"As we were walking home, Jack said, 'Lord, Frank! I've had such fun with the little lady in blue. I told her you wrote to me every Saturday, telling me the events of the week. She took all in.' He stopped to laugh; for he bubbled and chuckled so that he could not laugh and walk. 'And I told her you were deeply in love,' (another laugh); 'and that I could not get you to tell me the name of the lady, but that she had light brown hair, — in short, I drew from life, and gave her an exact description of herself; and that I was most anxious to see her, and implore

her to be merciful to you, for that you were a most timid, faint-hearted fellow with women.' He laughed till I thought he would have fallen down. 'I begged her, if she could guess who it was from my description — I'll answer for it she did — I took care of that; for I said you described a mole on the left cheek, in the most poetical way, saying Venus had pinched it out of envy at seeing any one more lovely — Oh, hold me up, or I shall fall — laughing and hunger make me so weak; — well, I say, I begged her, if she knew who your fair one could be, to implore her to save you. I said I knew one of your lungs had gone after a former unfortunate love-affair, and that I could not answer for the other if the lady here were cruel. She spoke of a respirator; but I told her that might do very well for the odd lung; but would it minister to a heart diseased? I really did talk fine; — I have found out the secret of eloquence — it's believing what you've got to say; and I worked myself well up with fancying you married to the little lady in blue.'

"I got to laughing at last, angry as I had been; his impudence was irresistible. Mrs. Rose had come home in the sedan, and gone to bed; and he and I sat up over the round of beef and brandy-and-water till two o'clock in the morning.

"He told me I had got quite into the professional way of mousing about a room, and mewing and purring according as my patients were ill or well. He mimicked me, and made me laugh at myself. He left early the next morning.

"Mr. Morgan came at his usual hour; he and Marshland would never have agreed, and I should have been uncomfortable to see two friends of mine disliking and despising each other.

"Mr. Morgan was ruffled; but with his deferential manner to women, he smoothed himself down before Mrs. Rose, — regretted that he had not been able to come to Miss Tomkinson's the evening before, and consequently had not seen her in the society she was so well calculated to adorn. But when we were by ourselves, he said,

"I was sent for to Mrs. Munton's this morning — the old spasms. May I ask what is this story she tells me about, —

about prison, in fact? I trust, sir, she has made some little mistake, and that you never were —; that it is an unfounded report.' He could not get it out, — 'that you were in Newgate for three months!' I burst out laughing; the story had grown like a mushroom indeed. Mr. Morgan looked grave. I told him the truth. Still he looked grave. 'I've no doubt, sir, that you acted rightly; but it has an awkward sound. I imagined from your hilarity just now that there was no foundation whatever for the story. Unfortunately there is.'

"'I was only a night at the police-station. I would go there again for the same cause, sir.'

"'Very fine spirit, sir, — quite like Don Quixote; but don't you see you might as well have been to the hulks at once?'

"'No, sir; I don't.'

"'Take my word, before long, the story will have grown to that. However, we won't anticipate evil. *Mens conscientia recti*, you remember, is the great thing. The part I regret is, that it may require some short time to overcome a little prejudice which the story may excite against you. However, we won't dwell on it. *Mens conscientia recti!* Don't think about it, sir.'

"It was clear he was thinking a good deal about it.

CHAPTER X.

"Two or three days before this time, I had had an invitation from the Bullocks to dine with them on Christmas-day. Mrs. Rose was going to spend the week with friends in the town where she formerly lived; and I had been pleased at the notion of being received into a family, and of being a little with Mr. Bullock, who struck me as a bluff good-hearted fellow.

"But this Tuesday before Christmas-day, there came an invitation from the vicar to dine there; there were to be only their own family and Mr. Morgan. 'Only their own family.' It was getting to be all the world to me. I was in a passion with myself for having been so ready to accept Mr. Bullock's invitation, — coarse and ungentlemanly as he was; with his wife's airs of pre-

tension, and Miss Bullock's stupidity. I turned it over in my mind. No! I could not have a bad headache, which should prevent me going to the place I did not care for, and yet leave me at liberty to go where I wished. All I could do was to join the vicarage girls after church, and walk by their side in a long country ramble. They were quiet; not sad, exactly; but it was evident that the thought of Walter was in their minds on this day. We went through a copse where there were a good number of ever-greens planted as covers for game. The snow was on the ground; but the sky was clear and bright, and the sun glittered on the smooth holly-leaves. Lizzie asked me to gather her some of the very bright red berries, and she was beginning a sentence with,

“‘Do you remember —,’ when Ellen said ‘*Hush*,’ and looked towards Sophy, who was walking a little apart, and crying softly to herself. There was evidently some connection between Walter and the holly-berries, for Lizzie threw them away at once when she saw Sophy’s tears. Soon we came to a stile which led to an open breezy common, half-covered with gorse. I helped the little girls over it, and set them to run down the slope; but I took Sophy’s arm in mine, and though I could not speak, I think she knew how I was feeling for her. I could hardly bear to bid her good-bye at the vicarage gate; it seemed as if I ought to go in and spend the day with her.

CHAPTER XI.

“I VENTED my ill-humour in being late for the Bullocks’ dinner. There were one or two clerks, towards whom Mr. Bullock was patronising and pressing. Mrs. Bullock was decked out in extraordinary finery. Miss Bullock looked plainer than ever; but she had on some old gown or other, I think, for I heard Mrs. Bullock tell her she was always making a figure of herself. I began to-day to suspect that the mother would not be sorry if I took a fancy to the step-daughter. I was again placed near her at dinner, and when the little ones came in to dessert, I was made to notice how fond of children she was, and

indeed when one of them nestled to her, her face did brighten; but the moment she caught this loud-whispered remark, the gloom came back again, with something even of anger in her look; and she was quite sullen and obstinate when urged to sing in the drawing-room. Mrs. Bullock turned to me —

“‘Some young ladies won’t sing unless they are asked by gentlemen.’ She spoke very crossly. ‘If you ask Jemima, she will probably sing. To oblige me, it is evident she will not.’

“I thought the singing, when we got it, would probably be a great bore; however, I did as I was bid, and went with my request to the young lady, who was sitting a little apart. She looked up at me with eyes full of tears, and said, in a decided tone (which, if I had not seen her eyes, I should have said was as cross as her mamma’s), ‘No, sir, I will not.’ She got up, and left the room. I expected to hear Mrs. Bullock abuse her for her obstinacy. Instead of that, she began to tell me of the money that had been spent on her education; of what each separate accomplishment had cost. ‘She was timid,’ she said, ‘but very musical. Wherever her future home might be, there would be no want of music.’ She went on praising her till I hated her. If they thought I was going to marry that great lubberly girl, they were mistaken. Mr. Bullock and the clerks came up. He brought out Liebig, and called me to him.

“‘I can understand a good deal of this Agricultural Chemistry,’ said he, ‘and have put it in practice — without much success, hitherto, I confess. But these unconnected letters puzzle me a little. I suppose they have some meaning, or else I should say it was mere book-making to put them in.’

“‘I think they give the page a very ragged appearance,’ said Mrs. Bullock, who had joined us. ‘I inherit a little of my late father’s taste for books, and must say I like to see a good type, a broad margin, and an elegant binding. My father despised variety; how he would have held up his hands aghast at the cheap literature of these times! He did not require many books, but he would have twenty editions of those that he had; and he paid more for binding than he did for the books themselves.

But elegance was everything with him. He would not have admitted your Liebig, Mr. Bullock; neither the nature of the subject, nor the common type, nor the common way in which your book is got up, would have suited him.'

"Go and make tea, my dear, and leave Mr. Harrison and me to talk over a few of these manures.'

"We settled to it; I explained the meaning of the symbols, and the doctrine of chemical equivalents. At last he said, 'Doctor! you're giving me too strong a dose of it at one time. Let's have a small quantity taken "hodie;" that's professional, as Mr. Morgan would call it. Come in and call when you have leisure, and give me a lesson in my alphabet. Of all you've been telling me I can only remember that C means carbon and O oxygen; and I see one must know the meaning of all these confounded letters before one can do much good with Liebig.'

"'We dine at three,' said Mrs. Bullock. 'There will always be a knife and fork for Mr. Harrison. Bullock! don't confine your invitation to the evening!'

"'Why, you see, I've a nap always after dinner, so I could not be learning chemistry then.'

"'Don't be so selfish, Mr. B. Think of the pleasure Jemima and I shall have in Mr. Harrison's society.'

"I put a stop to the discussion by saying I would come in in the evenings occasionally, and give Mr. Bullock a lesson, but that my professional duties occupied me invariably until that time.

"I liked Mr. Bullock. He was simple, and shrewd; and to be with a man was a relief, after all the feminine society I went through every day.

CHAPTER XII.

"THE next morning I met Miss Horsman.

"'So you dined at Mr. Bullock's yesterday, Mr. Harrison? Quite a family party, I hear. They are quite charmed with you, and your knowledge of chemistry. Mr. Bullock told me

so, in Hodgson's shop, just now. Miss Bullock is a nice girl, eh, Mr. Harrison?' She looked sharply at me. Of course, whatever I thought, I could do nothing but assent. 'A nice little fortune, too, — three thousand pounds, Consols, from her own mother.'

"What did I care? She might have three millions for me. I had begun to think a good deal about money, though, but not in connection with her. I had been doing up our books ready to send out our Christmas bills, and had been wondering how far the Vicar would consider three hundred a year, with a prospect of increase, would justify me in thinking of Sophy. Think of her I could not help; and the more I thought of how good, and sweet, and pretty, she was, the more I felt that she ought to have far more than I could offer. Besides my father was a shopkeeper, and I saw the Vicar had a sort of respect for family. I determined to try and be very attentive to my profession. I was as civil as could be to every one; and wore the nap off the brim of my hat by taking it off so often.

"I had my eyes open to every glimpse of Sophy. I am overstocked with gloves now that I bought at that time, by way of making errands into the shops where I saw her black gown. I bought pounds upon pounds of arrow-root, till I was tired of the eternal arrow-root puddings Mrs. Rose gave me. I asked her if she could not make bread of it, but she seemed to think that would be expensive; so I took to soap as a safe purchase. I believe soap improves by keeping.

CHAPTER XIII.

"THE more I knew of Mrs. Rose, the better I liked her. She was sweet, and kind, and motherly, and we never had any rubs. I hurt her once or twice, I think, by cutting her short in her long stories about Mr. Rose. But I found out that when she had plenty to do she did not think of him quite so much; so I expressed a wish for Corazza shirts, and in the puzzle of devising how they were to be cut out, she forgot Mr. Rose for some time. I was still more pleased by her way about some legacy her elder

brother left her. I don't know the amount, but it was something handsome, and she might have set up housekeeping for herself: but, instead, she told Mr. Morgan (who repeated it to me), that she should continue with me, as she had quite an elder sister's interest in me.

"The 'country young lady,' Miss Tyrrell, returned to Miss Tomkinson's after the holidays. She had an enlargement of the tonsils, which required to be frequently touched with caustic, so I often called to see her. Miss Caroline always received me, and kept me talking in her washed-out style, after I had seen my patient. One day she told me she thought she had a weakness about the heart, and would be glad if I would bring my stethoscope the next time, which I accordingly did; and while I was on my knees listening to the pulsations, one of the young ladies came in. She said:

"'Oh dear! I never! I beg your pardon, Ma'am,' and scuttled out. There was not much the matter with Miss Caroline's heart; a little feeble in action or so, a mere matter of weakness and general languor. When I went down I saw two or three of the girls peeping out of the half-closed school-room door, but they shut it immediately, and I heard them laughing. The next time I called, Miss Tomkinson was sitting in state to receive me.

"'Miss Tyrrell's throat does not seem to make much progress. Do you understand the case, Mr. Harrison — or should we have further advice? I think Mr. Morgan would probably know more about it.'

"I assured her it was the simplest thing in the world; that it always implied a little torpor in the constitution, and that we preferred working through the system, which of course was a slow process, and that the medicine the young lady was taking (iodide of iron) was sure to be successful, although the progress would not be rapid. She bent her head, and said, 'It might be so; but she confessed she had more confidence in medicines which had some effect.'

"She seemed to expect me to tell her something; but I had nothing to say, and accordingly I bade good-bye. Somehow

Miss Tomkinson always managed to make me feel very small, by a succession of snubbings; and whenever I left her I had always to comfort myself under her contradictions by saying to myself, 'Her saying it is so does not make it so.' Or I invented good retorts which I might have made to her brusque speeches if I had but thought of them at the right time. But it was provoking that I had not had the presence of mind to recollect them just when they were wanted.

CHAPTER XIV.

"ON the whole, things went on smoothly. Mr. Holden's legacy came in just about this time; and I felt quite rich. Five hundred pounds would furnish the house, I thought, when Mrs. Rose left and Sophy came. I was delighted, too, to imagine that Sophy perceived the difference of my manner to her from what it was to any one else, and that she was embarrassed and shy in consequence, but not displeased with me for it. All was so flourishing that I went about on wings instead of feet. We were very busy, without having anxious cares. My legacy was paid into Mr. Bullock's hands, who united a little banking business to his profession of law. In return for his advice about investments (which I never meant to take, having a more charming, if less profitable, mode in my head), I went pretty frequently to teach him his agricultural chemistry. I was so happy in Sophy's blushes that I was universally benevolent, and desirous of giving pleasure to every one. I went, at Mrs. Bullock's general invitation, to dinner there one day unexpectedly; but there was such a fuss of ill-concealed preparation consequent upon my coming, that I never went again. Her little boy came in, with an audibly given message from the cook, to ask —

"If this was the gentleman as she was to send in the best dinner-service and dessert for?"

"I looked deaf, but determined never to go again.

"Miss Bullock and I, meanwhile, became rather friendly. We found out that we mutually disliked each other; and were contented with the discovery. If people are worth anything,

this sort of non-loving is a very good beginning of friendship. Every good quality is revealed naturally and slowly, and is a pleasant surprise. I found out that Miss Bullock was sensible, and even sweet-tempered, when not irritated by her step-mother's endeavours to show her off. But she would sulk for hours after Mrs. Bullock's offensive praise of her good points. And I never saw such a black passion as she went into when she suddenly came into the room when Mrs. Bullock was telling me of all the offers she had had.

"My legacy made me feel up to extravagance. I scoured the country for a glorious nosegay of camellias, which I sent to Sophy on Valentine's day. I durst not add a line, but I wished the flowers could speak, and tell her how I loved her.

"I called on Miss Tyrrell that day. Miss Caroline was more simpering and affected than ever; and full of allusions to the day.

"Do you affix much sincerity of meaning to the little galantries of this day, Mr. Harrison?" asked she in a languishing tone. I thought of my camellias, and how my heart had gone with them into Sophy's keeping; and I told her I thought one might often take advantage of such a time to hint at feelings one dared not fully express.

"I remembered afterwards the forced display she made, after Miss Tyrrell left the room, of a valentine. But I took no notice at the time; my head was full of Sophy.

"It was on that very day that John Brouncker, the gardener to all of us who had small gardens to keep in order, fell down and injured his wrist severely (I don't give you the details of the case, because they would not interest you, being too technical; if you've any curiosity, you will find them in the *Lancet* of August in that year.) We all liked John, and this accident was felt like a town's misfortune. The gardens, too, just wanted doing up. Both Mr. Morgan and I went directly to him. It was a very awkward case, and his wife and children were crying sadly. He himself was in great distress at being thrown out of work. He begged us to do something that would cure him speedily, as he could not afford to be laid up, with six children

depending on him for bread. We did not say much before him, but we both thought the arm would have to come off, and it was his right arm. We talked it over when we came out of the cottage. Mr. Morgan had no doubt of the necessity. I went back at dinner-time to see the poor fellow. He was feverish and anxious. He had caught up some expression of Mr. Morgan's in the morning, and had guessed the measure we had in contemplation. He bade his wife leave the room, and spoke to me by myself.

"If you please, sir, I'd rather be done for at once than have my arm taken off, and be a burden to my family. I'm not afraid of dying, but I could not stand being a cripple for life, eating bread, and not able to earn it."

"The tears were in his eyes with earnestness. I had all along been more doubtful about the necessity of the amputation than Mr. Morgan. I knew the improved treatment in such cases. In his days there was much more of the rough and ready in surgical practice; so I gave the poor fellow some hope.

"In the afternoon I met Mr. Bullock.

"So you're to try your hand at an amputation to-morrow, I hear. Poor John Brouncker! I used to tell him he was not careful enough about his ladders. Mr. Morgan is quite excited about it. He asked me to be present, and see how well a man from Guy's could operate; he says he is sure you'll do it beautifully. Pah! no such sights for me, thank you."

"Ruddy Mr. Bullock went a shade or two paler at the thought.

"Curious! how professionally a man views these things. Here's Mr. Morgan, who has been all along as proud of you as if you were his own son, absolutely rubbing his hands at the idea of this crowning glory, this feather in your cap! He told me just now he knew he had always been too nervous to be a good operator; and had therefore preferred sending for White from Chesterton. But now any one might have a serious accident who liked, for you would be always at hand."

"I told Mr. Bullock, I really thought we might avoid the

amputation; but his mind was pre-occupied with the idea of it, and he did not care to listen to me. The whole town was full of it. That is a charm in a little town, everybody is so sympathetically full of the same events. Even Miss Horsman stopped me to ask after John Brouncker with interest; but she threw cold water upon my intention of saving the arm.

“As for the wife and family, we'll take care of them. Think what a fine opportunity you have of showing off, Mr. Harrison!”

“That was just like her. Always ready with her suggestions of ill-natured or interested motives.

“Mr. Morgan heard my proposal of a mode of treatment by which I thought it possible that the arm might be saved.

“‘I differ from you, Mr. Harrison,’ said he. ‘I regret it, but I differ *in toto* from you. Your kind heart deceives you in this instance. There is no doubt that amputation must take place — not later than to-morrow morning, I should say. I have made myself at liberty to attend upon you, sir; I shall be happy to officiate as your assistant. Time was when I should have been proud to be principal, but a little trembling in my arm incapacitates me.’

“I urged my reasons upon him again; but he was obstinate. He had, in fact, boasted so much of my acquirements as an operator, that he was unwilling I should lose this opportunity of displaying my skill. He could not see that there would be greater skill evinced in saving the arm; nor did I think of this at the time. I grew angry at his old-fashioned narrow-mindedness, as I thought it; and I became dogged in my resolution to adhere to my own course. We parted very coolly; and I went straight off to John Brouncker to tell him I believed that I could save the arm, if he would refuse to have it amputated. When I calmed myself a little, before going in and speaking to him, I could not help acknowledging that we should run some risk of locked jaw; but, on the whole, and after giving most earnest conscientious thought to the case, I was sure that my mode of treatment would be best.

“He was a sensible man. I told him the difference of opinion

that existed between Mr. Morgan and myself. I said that there might be some little risk attending the non-amputation; but that I should guard against it, and I trusted that I should be able to preserve his arm.

“Under God’s blessing,” said he reverently. I bowed my head. I don’t like to talk too frequently of the dependence which I always felt on that holy blessing, as to the result of my efforts; but I was glad to hear that speech of John’s, because it showed a calm and faithful heart; and I had almost certain hopes of him from that time.

“We agreed that he should tell Mr. Morgan the reason of his objections to the amputation, and his reliance on my opinion. I determined to recur to every book I had relating to such cases, and to convince Mr. Morgan, if I could, of my wisdom. Unluckily, I found out afterwards that he had met Miss Horsman in the time that intervened before I saw him again at his own house that evening; and she had more than hinted that I shrank from performing the operation, ‘for very good reasons, no doubt. She had heard that the medical students in London were a bad set, and were not remarkable for regular attendance in the hospitals. She might be mistaken; but she thought it was, perhaps, quite as well poor John Brouncker had not his arm cut off by —. Was there not such a thing as mortification coming on after a clumsy operation? It was, perhaps, only a choice of deaths!’

“Mr. Morgan had been stung at all this. Perhaps I did not speak quite respectfully enough; I was a good deal excited. We only got more and more angry with each other; though he, to do him justice, was as civil as could be all the time, thinking that thereby he concealed his vexation and disappointment. He did not try to conceal his anxiety about poor John. I went home weary and dispirited. I made up and took the necessary applications to John; and, promising to return with the dawn of day (I would fain have stayed, but I did not wish him to be alarmed about himself), I went home, and resolved to sit up and study the treatment of similar cases.

“Mrs. Rose knocked at the door.

“‘Come in!’ said I, sharply.

“She said she had seen I had something on my mind all day, and she could not go to bed without asking if there was nothing she could do. She was good and kind; and I could not help telling her a little of the truth. She listened pleasantly; and I shook her warmly by the hand, thinking that though she might not be very wise, her good heart made her worth a dozen keen, sharp, hard people, like Miss Horsman.

“When I went at daybreak, I saw John’s wife for a few minutes outside of the door. She seemed to wish her husband had been in Mr. Morgan’s hands rather than mine; but she gave me as good an account as I dared to hope for of the manner in which her husband had passed the night. This was confirmed by my own examination.

“When Mr. Morgan and I visited him together later on in the day, John said what we had agreed upon the day before; and I told Mr. Morgan openly that it was by my advice that amputation was declined. He did not speak to me till we had left the house. Then he said — ‘Now, sir, from this time, I consider this case entirely in your hands. Only remember the poor fellow has a wife and six children. In case you come round to my opinion, remember that Mr. White could come over, as he has done before, for the operation.’

“So! Mr. Morgan believed I declined operating because I felt myself incapable. — Very well! — I was much mortified.

“An hour after we parted, I received a note to this effect —

“‘Dear Sir, — I will take the long round to day, to leave you at liberty to attend to Brouncker’s case, which I feel to be a very responsible one.

“‘J. MORGAN.’

“This was kindly done. I went back, as soon as I could, to John’s cottage. While I was in the inner room with him, I heard the Miss Tomkinsons’ voices outside. They had called to inquire. Miss Tomkinson came in, and evidently was poking and snuffing about. (Mrs. Brouncker told her that I was within; and within I resolved to be till they had gone.)

“‘What is this close smell?’ asked she. ‘I am afraid you are not cleanly. Cheese! — cheese in this cupboard! No wonder there is an unpleasant smell. Don’t you know how particular you should be about being clean when there is illness about?’

“Mrs. Brouncker was exquisitely clean in general, and was piqued at these remarks.

“‘If you please, ma’am, I could not leave John yesterday to do any house-work, and Jenny put the dinner-things away. She is but eight years old.’

“But this did not satisfy Miss Tomkinson, who was evidently pursuing the course of her observations.

“‘Fresh butter, I declare! Well now, Mrs. Brouncker, do you know I don’t allow myself fresh butter at this time of the year? How can you save, indeed, with such extravagance!’

“‘Please, ma’am,’ answered Mrs. Brouncker, ‘you’d think it strange, if I was to take such liberties in your house as you’re taking here.’

“I expected to hear a sharp answer. No! Miss Tomkinson liked true plain-speaking. The only person in whom she would tolerate round-about ways of talking was her sister.

“‘Well, that’s true,’ she said. ‘Still, you must not be above taking advice. Fresh butter is extravagant at this time of the year. However, you’re a good kind of woman, and I’ve a great respect for John. Send Jenny for some broth as soon as he can take it. Come Caroline, we have got to go on to Williams’s.’

“But Miss Caroline said that she was tired, and would rest where she was till Miss Tomkinson came back. I was a prisoner for some time, I found. When she was alone with Mrs. Brouncker, she said —

“‘You must not be hurt by my sister’s abrupt manner. She means well. She has not much imagination or sympathy, and cannot understand the distraction of mind produced by the illness of a worshipped husband.’ I could hear the loud sigh of commiseration which followed this speech. Mrs. Brouncker said —

"Please ma'am, I don't worship my husband. I would not be so wicked."

"Goodness! — You don't think it wicked, do you? For my part, if... I should worship, I should adore him.' I thought she need not imagine such improbable cases. But sturdy Mrs. Brouncker said again —

"I hope I know my duty better. I've not learned my Commandments for nothing. I know whom I ought to worship."

"Just then the children came in, dirty and unwashed, I have no doubt. And now Miss Caroline's real nature peeped out. She spoke sharply to them, and asked them if they had no manners, little pigs as they were, to come brushing against her silk gown in that way? She sweetened herself again; and was as sugary as love when Miss Tomkinson returned for her, accompanied by one whose voice, 'like winds in summer sighing,' I knew to be my dear Sophy's.

"She did not say much; but what she did say, and the manner in which she spoke, was tender and compassionate in the highest degree; and she came to take the four little ones back with her to the Vicarage, in order that they might be out of their mother's way; the older two might help at home. She offered to wash their hands and faces; and when I emerged from my inner chamber, after the Miss Tomkinsons had left, I found her with a chubby child on her knees, bubbling and sputtering against her white wet hand, with a face bright, rosy, and merry under the operation. Just as I came in, she said to him, 'There, Jemmy, now I can kiss you with this nice clean face.'

"She coloured when she saw me. I liked her speaking, and I liked her silence. She was silent now, and I 'lo'ed a' the better.' I gave my directions to Mrs. Brouncker, and hastened to overtake Sophy and the children; but they had gone round by the lanes, I suppose, for I saw nothing of them.

"I was very anxious about the case. At night I went again. Miss Horsman had been there; I believe she was really kind among the poor, but she could not help leaving a sting behind her everywhere. She had been frightening Mrs. Brouncker

about her husband; and been, I have no doubt, expressing her doubts of my skill; for Mrs. Brouncker began:

“Oh, please sir, if you 'll only let Mr. Morgan take off his arm. I will never think the worse of you for not being able to do it.”

“I told her it was from no doubt of my own competency to perform the operation that I wished to save the arm; but that he himself was anxious to have it spared.

“Aye, bless him! he frets about not earning enough to keep us, if he 's crippled; but, sir, I don't care about that. I would work my fingers to the bone, and so would the children; I 'm sure we 'd be proud to do for him, and keep him; God bless him! it would be far better to have him only with one arm than to have him in the church-yard, Miss Horsman says'—

“‘Confound Miss Horsman!’ said I—

“‘Thank you, Mr. Harrison,’ said her well-known voice behind me. She had come out, dark as it was, to bring some old linen to Mrs. Brouncker; for, as I said before, she was very kind to all the poor people of Duncombe.

“‘I beg your pardon;’ for I really was sorry for my speech, or rather, that she had heard it.

“‘There is no occasion for any apology,’ she replied, drawing herself up, and pinching her lips into a very venomous shape.

“John was doing pretty well; but of course the danger of locked jaw was not over. Before I left, his wife entreated me to take off the arm;—she wrung her hands in her passionate entreaty. ‘Spare him to me, Mr. Harrison,’ she implored. Miss Horsman stood by. It was mortifying enough; but I thought of the power which was in my hands, as I firmly believed, of saving the limb; and I was inflexible.

“You cannot think how pleasantly Mrs. Rose's sympathy came in on my return. To be sure she did not understand one word of the case, which I detailed to her; but she listened with interest, and, as long as she held her tongue, I thought she

was really taking it in; but her first remark was as *mal à propos* as could be.

“‘You are anxious to save the tibia, — I see completely how difficult that will be. My late husband had a case exactly similar, and I remember his anxiety; but you must not distress yourself too much, my dear Mr. Harrison; I have no doubt it will end well.’

“I knew she had no grounds for this assurance, and yet it comforted me.

“However, as it happened, John did fully as well as I could hope — of course he was long in rallying his strength; and, indeed, sea-air was evidently so necessary for his complete restoration, that I accepted with gratitude Mrs. Rose’s proposal of sending him to Highport for a fortnight or three weeks. Her kind generosity in this matter made me more desirous than ever of paying her every mark of respect and attention.

CHAPTER XV.

“ABOUT this time there was a sale at Ashmeadow, a pretty house in the neighbourhood of Duncombe. It was likewise an easy walk, and the spring days tempted many people thither, who had no intention of buying anything, but who liked the idea of rambling through the woods, gay with early primroses and wild daffodils, and of seeing the gardens and house, which till now had been shut up from the ingress of the town’s-people. Mrs. Rose had planned to go, but an unlucky cold prevented her. She begged me to bring her a very particular account, saying she delighted in details, and always questioned the late Mr. Rose as to the side dishes of the dinners to which he went. The late Mr. Rose’s conduct was always held up as a model to me, by the way. I walked to Ashmeadow, pausing, or loitering with different parties of town’s-people, all bound in the same direction. At last I found the Vicar and Sophy, and with them I staid. I sat by Sophy, and talked and listened. A sale is a very pleasant gathering after all. The auctioneer, in a country place, is privileged to joke from his rostrum; and, having a

Lizzie Leigh.

personal knowledge of most of the people, can sometimes make a very keen hit at their circumstances, and turn the laugh against them. For instance, on the present occasion, there was a farmer present, with his wife, who was notoriously the grey mare. The auctioneer was selling some horse-cloths, and called out to recommend the article to her, telling her, with a knowing look at the company, that they would make her a dashing pair of trousers, if she was in want of such an article. She drew herself up with dignity, and said "Come, John, we've had enough of these." Whereupon there was a burst of laughter, and in the midst of it John meekly followed his wife out of the place. The furniture in the sitting-rooms was, I believe, very beautiful, but I did not notice it much. Suddenly I heard the auctioneer speaking to me, 'Mr. Harrison, won't you give me a bid for this table?'

"It was a very pretty little table of walnut-wood. I thought it would go into my study very well, so I gave him a bid. I saw Miss Horsman bidding against me, so I went off with full force, and at last it was knocked down to me. The auctioneer smiled, and congratulated me.

"A most useful present for Mrs. Harrison, when that lady comes.'

"Everybody laughed. They like a joke about marriage, it is so easy of comprehension. But the table which I had thought was for writing, turned out to be a work-table, scissors and thimble complete. No wonder I looked foolish. Sophy was not looking at me, that was one comfort. She was busy arranging a nosegay of wood-anemone and wild sorrel.

"Miss Horsman came up, with her curious eyes.

"I had no idea things were far enough advanced for you to be purchasing a work-table, Mr. Harrison.'

"I laughed off my awkwardness.

"Did not you, Miss Horsman? You are very much behind-hand. You have not heard of my piano, then?'

"No, indeed,' said she, half uncertain whether I was serious or not. 'Then it seems there is nothing wanting but the lady.'

"‘Perhaps she may not be wanting either,’ said I; for I wished to perplex her keen curiosity.

CHAPTER XVI.

“WHEN I got home from my round, I found Mrs. Rose in some sorrow.

“‘Miss Horsman called after you left,’ said she. ‘Have you heard how John Brouncker is at Highport?’

“‘Very well,’ replied I. “I called on his wife just now, and she had just got a letter from him. She had been anxious about him, for she had not heard for a week. However, all’s right now; and she has pretty well of work at Mrs. Munton’s, as her servant is ill. Oh, they’ll do, never fear.’

“‘At Mrs. Munton’s? Oh, that accounts for it, then. She is so deaf, and makes such blunders.’

“‘Accounts for what?’ asked I.

“‘Oh, perhaps I had better not tell you,’ hesitated Mrs. Rose.

“‘Yes, tell me at once. I beg your pardon, but I hate mysteries.’

“‘You are so like my poor dear Mr. Rose. He used to speak to me just in that sharp, cross way. — It is only that Miss Horsman called. She had been making a collection for John Brouncker’s widow, and’ —

“‘But the man’s alive!’ said I.

“‘So it seems. But Mrs. Munton had told her that he was dead. And she has got Mr. Morgan’s name down at the head of the list, and Mr. Bullock’s’ —

“Mr. Morgan and I had got into a short cool way of speaking to each other ever since we had differed so much about the treatment of Brouncker’s arm; and I had heard once or twice of his shakes of the head over John’s case. He would not have spoken against my method for the world, and fancied that he concealed his fears.

“‘Miss Horsman is very ill-natured, I think,’ sighed forth Mrs. Rose.

"I saw that something had been said of which I had not heard, for the mere fact of collecting money for the widow was good-natured, whoever did it; so I asked quietly what she had said.

"Oh, I don't know if I should tell you. I only know she made me cry; for I'm not well, and I can't bear to hear any one I live with abused."

"Come! this was pretty plain.

"What did Miss Horsman say of me?" asked I, half laughing, for I knew there was no love lost between us.

"Oh, she only said she wondered you could go to sales, and spend your money there, when your ignorance had made Jane Brouncker a widow, and her children fatherless."

"Pooh! pooh! John's alive, and likely to live as long as you or I, thanks to you, Mrs. Rose."

"When my work-table came home, Mrs. Rose was so struck with its beauty and completeness, and I was so much obliged to her for her identification of my interests with hers, and the kindness of her whole conduct about John, that I begged her to accept of it. She seemed very much pleased; and, after a few apologies, she consented to take it, and placed it in the most conspicuous part of the front parlour, where she usually sat. There was a good deal of morning calling in Duncombe after the sale; and, during this time, the fact of John's being alive was established to the conviction of all except Miss Horsman, who, I believe, still doubted. I myself told Mr. Morgan, who immediately went to reclaim his money; saying to me, that he was thankful of the information; he was truly glad to hear it; and he shook me warmly by the hand for the first time for a month.

CHAPTER XVII.

"A FEW days after the sale, I was in the consulting room. The servant must have left the folding-doors a little ajar, I think. Mrs. Munton came to call on Mrs. Rose; and the former being deaf, I heard all the speeches of the latter lady,

as she was obliged to speak very loud in order to be heard. She began:—

“This is a great pleasure, Mrs. Munton; so seldom as you are well enough to go out.”

“Mumble, mumble, mumble, through the door.

“Oh, very well, thank you. Take this seat, and then you can admire my new work-table, ma'am; a present from Mr. Harrison.”

“Mumble, mumble.

“Who could have told you, ma'am? Miss Horsman. Oh yes, I showed it Miss Horsman.”

“Mumble, mumble.

“I don't quite understand you, ma'am.”

“Mumble, mumble.

“I'm not blushing, I believe. I really am quite in the dark as to what you mean.”

“Mumble, mumble.

“Oh yes, Mr. Harrison and I are most comfortable together. He reminds me so of my dear Mr. Rose;—just as fidgety and anxious in his profession.”

“Mumble, mumble.

“I'm sure you are joking now, ma'am.” Then I heard a pretty loud—

“Oh no;” mumble, mumble, mumble, for a long time.

“Did he really? Well, I'm sure I don't know. I should be sorry to think he was doomed to be unfortunate in so serious an affair; but you know my undying regard for the late Mr. Rose.”

“Another long mumble.

“You're very kind, I'm sure. Mr. Rose always thought more of my happiness than his own”—a little crying—“but the turtle-dove has always been my ideal, ma'am.”

“Mumble, mumble.

“No one could have been happier than I. As you say, it is a compliment to matrimony.”

“Mumble.

“Oh, but you must not repeat such a thing. Mr. Harrison

would not like it. He can't bear to have his affairs spoken about.'

"Then there was a change of subject; an inquiry after some poor person, I imagine; I heard Mrs. Rose say —

"She has got a mucous membrane, I'm afraid, ma'am.'

"A commiserating mumble.

"Not always fatal. I believe Mr. Rose knew some cases that lived for years after it was discovered that they had a mucous membrane.' — a pause. Then Mrs. Rose spoke in a different tone.

"Are you sure, ma'am, there is no mistake about what he said?"

"Mumble.

"Pray don't be so observant, Mrs. Munton; you find out too much. One can have no little secrets.'

"The call broke up; and I heard Mrs. Munton say in the passage, 'I wish you joy, ma'am, with all my heart. There's no use denying it; for I've seen all along what would happen.'

"When I went in to dinner, I said to Mrs. Rose —

"You've had Mrs. Munton here, I think. Did she bring any news?" To my surprise, she bridled and simpered, and replied, 'Oh, you must not ask, Mr. Harrison: such foolish reports.'

"I did not ask, as she seemed to wish me not, and I knew there were silly reports always about. Then I think she was vexed that I did not ask. Altogether she went on so strangely that I could not help looking at her; and then she took up a hand-screen, and held it between me and her. I really felt rather anxiously.

"Are you not feeling well?" said I, innocently.

"Oh, thank you, I believe I'm quite well; only the room is rather warm, is it not?"

"Let me put the blinds down for you; the sun begins to have a good deal of power." I drew down the blinds.

"You are so attentive, Mr. Harrison. Mr. Rose himself never did more for my little wishes than you do.'

"I wish I could do more, — I wish I could show you how

much I feel — ' her kindness to John Brouncker, I was going on to say; but I was just then called out to a patient. Before I went I turned back, and said —

" 'Take care of yourself, my dear Mrs. Rose; you had better rest a little.'

" 'For your sake, I will,' said she tenderly.

" I did not care for whose sake she did it. Only I really thought she was not quite well, and required rest. I thought she was more affected than usual at tea-time; and could have been angry with her nonsensical ways once or twice; but that I knew the real goodness of her heart. She said she wished she had the power to sweeten my life as she could my tea. I told her what a comfort she had been all during my late time of anxiety, and then I stole out to try if I could hear the evening singing at the Vicarage, by standing close to the garden wall.

CHAPTER XVIII.

" THE next morning I met Mr. Bullock by appointment, to talk a little about the legacy which was paid into his hands. As I was leaving his office, feeling full of my riches, I met Miss Horsman. She smiled rather grimly, and said:

" 'Oh! Mr. Harrison I must congratulate, I believe. I don't know whether I ought to have known, but as I do, I must wish you joy. A very nice little sum, too. I always said you would have money.'

" So she had found out my legacy, had she? Well, it was no secret, and one likes the reputation of being a person of property. Accordingly I smiled, and said I was much obliged to her, and if I could alter the figures to my liking, she might congratulate me still more.

" She said, 'Oh, Mr. Harrison, you can't have everything. It would be better the other way, certainly. Money is the great thing, as you've found out. The relation died most opportunely, I must say.'

" 'He was no relative,' said I; 'only an intimate friend.'

"Dear-ah-me! I thought it had been a brother! Well, at any rate, the legacy is safe."

"I wished her good morning, and passed on. Before long I was sent for to Miss Tomkinson's.

"Miss Tomkinson sat in severe state to receive me. I went in with an air of ease, because I always felt too uncomfortable.

"Is this true that I hear?" asked she, in an inquisitorial manner.

"I thought she alluded to my five hundred pounds. So I smiled, and said that I believed it was.

"Can money be so great an object with you, Mr. Harrison?" she asked again.

"I said I had never cared much for money, except as an assistance to any plan of settling in life; and then, as I did not like her severe way of treating the subject, I said that I hoped every one was well; though of course I expected some one was ill, or I should not have been sent for.

"Miss Tomkinson looked very grave and sad. Then she answered, 'Caroline is very poorly — the old palpitations at the heart; but of course that is nothing to you.'

"I said I was very sorry. She had a weakness there, I knew. Could I see her? I might be able to order something for her.

"I thought I heard Miss Tomkinson say something in a low voice about my being a heartless deceiver. Then she spoke up. 'I was always distrustful of you, Mr. Harrison. I never liked your looks. I begged Caroline again and again not to confide in you. I foresaw how it would end. And now I fear her precious life will be a sacrifice.'

"I begged her not to distress herself, for in all probability there was very little the matter with her sister. Might I see her?

"No!" she said, shortly, standing up as if to dismiss me. 'There has been too much of this seeing and calling. By my consent, you shall never see her again.'

"I bowed. I was annoyed, of course. Such a dismissal

might injure my practice just when I was most anxious to increase it.

"'Have you no apology, no excuse to offer?'

"I said I had done my best; I did not feel that there was any reason to offer an apology. I wished her good morning. Suddenly she came forwards.

"'Oh, Mr. Harrison,' said she, 'if you have really loved Caroline, do not let a little paltry money make you desert her for another.'

"I was struck dumb. Loved Miss Caroline! I loved Miss Tomkinson a great deal better, and yet I disliked her. She went on.

"'I have saved nearly three thousand pounds. If you think you are too poor to marry without money, I will give it all to Caroline. I am strong, and can go on working; but she is weak, and this disappointment will kill her.' She sat down suddenly, and covered her face with her hands. Then she looked up.

"'You are unwilling, I see. Don't suppose I would have urged you if it had been for myself; but she has had so much sorrow.' And now she fairly cried aloud. I tried to explain; but she would not listen, but kept saying, 'Leave the house, sir; leave the house!' But I would be heard.

"'I have never had any feeling warmer than respect for Miss Caroline, and I have never shown any different feeling. I never for an instant thought of making her my wife, and she has had no cause in my behaviour to imagine I entertained any such intention.'

"'This is adding insult to injury,' said she. 'Leave the house, sir, this instant!'

CHAPTER XIX.

"I WENT, and sadly enough. In a small town such an occurrence is sure to be talked about, and to make a great deal of mischief. When I went home to dinner I was so full of it, and foresaw so clearly that I should need some advocate soon to set

the case in its right light, that I determined on making a confidante of good Mrs. Rose. I could not eat. She watched me tenderly, and sighed when she saw my want of appetite.

"I am sure you have something on your mind, Mr. Harrison. Would it be — would it not be — a relief to impart it to some sympathising friend?"

"It was just what I wanted to do.

"My dear kind Mrs. Rose," said I, "I must tell you, if you will listen."

"She took up the fire-screen, and held it, as yesterday, between me and her.

"The most unfortunate misunderstanding has taken place. Miss Tomkinson thinks that I have been paying attentions to Miss Caroline; when, in fact — may I tell you, Mrs. Rose? — my affections are placed elsewhere. Perhaps you have found it out already?" for indeed I thought I had been too much in love to conceal my attachment to Sophy from any one who knew my movements as well as Mrs. Rose.

"She hung down her head, and said she believed she had found out my secret.

"Then only think how miserably I am situated. If I have any hope — oh, Mrs. Rose, do you think I have any hope?" —

"She put the hand-screen still more before her face, and after some hesitation she said she thought 'if I persevered — in time — I might have hope.' And then she suddenly got up, and left the room.

CHAPTER XX.

"THAT afternoon I met Mr. Bullock in the street. My mind was so full of the affair with Miss Tomkinson, that I should have passed him without notice, if he had not stopped me short, and said that he must speak to me; about my wonderful five hundred pounds, I supposed. But I did not care for that now.

"What is this I hear," said he, severely, "about your engagement with Mrs. Rose?"

"'With Mrs. Rose!' said I, almost laughing, although my heart was heavy enough.

"'Yes! with Mrs. Rose!' said he, sternly.

"'I'm not engaged to Mrs. Rose,' I replied. 'There is some mistake.'

"'I'm glad to hear it, sir,' he answered, 'very glad. It requires some explanation, however. Mrs. Rose has been congratulated, and has acknowledged the truth of the report. It is confirmed by many facts. The work-table you bought, confessing your intention of giving it to your future wife, is given to her. How do you account for these things, sir?'

"I said I did not pretend to account for them. At present, a good deal was inexplicable; and when I could give an explanation, I did not think that I should feel myself called upon to give it to him.

"'Very well, sir, very well,' replied he, growing very red. 'I shall take care, and let Mr. Morgan know the opinion I entertain of you. What do you think that man deserves to be called who enters a family under the plea of friendship, and takes advantage of his intimacy to win the affections of the daughter, and then engages himself to another woman?'

"I thought he referred to Miss Caroline. I simply said I could only say that I was not engaged; and that Miss Tomkinson had been quite mistaken in supposing I had been paying any attentions to her sister beyond those dictated by mere civility.

"'Miss Tomkinson! Miss Caroline! I don't understand to what you refer. Is there another victim to your perfidy! What I allude to are the attentions you have paid to my daughter, Miss Bullock.'

"Another! I could but disclaim, as I had done in the case of Miss Caroline; but I began to be in despair. Would Miss Horsman, too, come forward as a victim to my tender affections? It was all Mr. Morgan's doing, who had lectured me into this tenderly deferential manner. But on the score of Miss Bullock, I was brave in my innocence. I had positively disliked her; and so I told her father, though in more civil

and measured terms, adding that I was sure the feeling was reciprocal.

"He looked as if he would like to horse-whip me. I longed to call him out.

"I hope my daughter has had sense enough to despise you; I hope she has, that's all. I trust my wife may be mistaken as to her feelings."

"So, he had heard all through the medium of his wife. That explained something, and rather calmed me. I begged he would ask Miss Bullock if she had ever thought I had any ulterior object in my intercourse with her, beyond mere friendliness (and not so much of that, I might have added). I would refer it to her.

"'Girls,' said Mr. Bullock, a little more quietly, 'do not like to acknowledge that they have been deceived and disappointed. I consider my wife's testimony as likely to be nearer the truth than my daughter's, for that reason. And she tells me she never doubted but that, if not absolutely engaged, you understood each other perfectly. She is sure Jemima is deeply wounded by your engagement to Mrs. Rose.'

"Once for all, I am not engaged to anybody. Till you have seen your daughter, and learnt the truth from her, I will wish you farewell."

"I bowed in a stiff, haughty manner, and walked off homewards. But when I got to my own door, I remembered Mrs. Rose, and all that Mr. Bullock had said about her acknowledging the truth of the report of my engagement to her. Where could I go to be safe? Mrs. Rose, Miss Bullock, Miss Caroline—they lived as it were at the three points of an equilateral triangle; here was I in the centre. I would go to Mr. Morgan's, and drink tea with him. There, at any rate, I was secure from any one wanting to marry me; and I might be as professionally bland as I liked, without being misunderstood. But there, too, a *contretemps* awaited me.

CHAPTER XXI.

"MR. MORGAN was looking grave. After a minute or two of humming and hawing, he said —

"I have been sent for to Miss Caroline Tomkinson, Mr. Harrison. I am sorry to hear of this — I am grieved to find that there seems to have been some trifling with the affections of a very worthy lady. Miss Tomkinson, who is in sad distress, tells me that they had every reason to believe that you were attached to her sister. May I ask if you do not intend to marry her?"

"I said nothing was farther from my thoughts.

"'My dear sir,' said Mr. Morgan, rather agitated, 'do not express yourself so strongly and vehemently. It is derogatory to the sex to speak so. It is more respectful to say, in these cases, that you do not venture to entertain a hope; such a manner is generally understood, and does not sound like such positive objection.'

"I cannot help it, sir; I must talk in my own natural manner. I would not speak disrespectfully of any woman; but nothing should induce me to marry Miss Caroline Tomkinson; not if she were Venus herself, and Queen of England into the bargain. I cannot understand what has given rise to the idea."

"Indeed, sir; I think that is very plain. You have a trifling case to attend to in the house, and you invariably make it a pretext for seeing and conversing with the lady."

"That was her doing, not mine!" said I, vehemently.

"Allow me to go on. You are discovered on your knees before her, — a positive injury to the establishment, as Miss Tomkinson observes; a most passionate valentine is sent; and when questioned, you acknowledge the sincerity of meaning which you affix to such things;" — he stopped, for in his earnestness he had been talking more quickly than usual, and was out of breath. I burst in with my explanations —

"The valentine I knew nothing about."

"It is in your handwriting," said he, coldly. "I should

be most deeply grieved to — in fact, I will not think it possible of your father's son. But I must say, it is in your handwriting.'

"I tried again, and at last succeeded in convincing him that I had been only unfortunate, not intentionally guilty of winning Miss Caroline's affections. I said that I had been endeavouring, it was true, to practise the manner he had recommended, of universal sympathy, and recalled to his mind some of the advice he had given me. He was a good deal hurried.

"‘But, my dear sir, I had no idea you would carry it out to such consequences. “Philandering,” Miss Tomkinson called it. That is a hard word, sir. My manner has been always tender and sympathetic; but I am not aware that I ever excited any hopes; there never was any report about me. I believe no lady was ever attached to me. You must strive after this happy medium, sir.’

"I was still distressed. Mr. Morgan had only heard of one, but there were three ladies (including Miss Bullock) hoping to marry me. He saw my annoyance.

"‘Don’t be too much distressed about it, my dear sir; I was sure you were too honourable a man, from the first. With a conscience like yours, I would defy the world.’

"He became anxious to console me, and I was hesitating whether I would not tell him all my three dilemmas, when a note was brought in to him. It was from Mrs. Munton. He threw it to me with a face of dismay.

"‘My dear Mr. Morgan, — I most sincerely congratulate you on the happy matrimonial engagement I hear you have formed with Miss Tomkinson. All previous circumstances, as I have just been remarking to Miss Horsman, combine to promise you felicity. And I wish that every blessing may attend your married life.

"‘Most sincerely yours,

"‘JANE MUNTON.’

"I could not help laughing, he had been so lately congratu-

lating himself that no report of the kind had ever been circulated about himself. He said —

“ ‘Sir! this is no laughing matter; I assure you it is not.’ I could not resist asking, if I was to conclude that there was no truth in the report.

“ ‘Truth, sir! it’s a lie from beginning to end. I don’t like to speak too decidedly about any lady; and I’ve a great respect for Miss Tomkinson; but I do assure you, sir, I’d as soon marry one of her Majesty’s Life-guards. I would rather; — it would be more suitable. Miss Tomkinson is a very worthy lady; but she’s a perfect grenadier.’

“ He grew very nervous. He was evidently insecure. He thought it not impossible that Miss Tomkinson might come and marry him, *vi et armis*. I am sure he had some dim idea of abduction in his mind. Still, he was better off than I was; for he was in his own house, and report had only engaged him to one lady: while I stood like Paris among three contending beauties. Truly, an apple of discord had been thrown into our little town. I suspected, at the time, what I know now, that it was Miss Horsman’s doing; not intentionally, I will do her the justice to say. But she had shouted out the story of my behaviour to Miss Caroline up Mrs. Munton’s trumpet; and that lady, possessed with the idea that I was engaged to Mrs. Rose, had imagined the masculine pronoun to relate to Mr. Morgan, whom she had seen only that afternoon *tête-à-tête* with Miss Tomkinson, condoling with her in some tender deferential manner, I’ll be bound.

CHAPTER XXII.

“ I WAS very cowardly. I positively dared not go home; but at length I was obliged to go. I had done all I could to console Mr. Morgan, but he refused to be comforted. I went at last. I rang at the bell. I don’t know who opened the door, but I think it was Mrs. Rose. I kept a handkerchief to my face, and, muttering something about having a dreadful toothache, I flew up to my room, and bolted the door. I had no candle;

but what did that signify. I was safe. I could not sleep; and when I did fall into a sort of doze, it was ten times worse wakening up. I could not remember whether I was engaged or not. If I was engaged, who was the lady? I had always considered myself as rather plain than otherwise; but surely I had made a mistake. Fascinating I certainly must be; but perhaps I was handsome. As soon as day dawned, I got up to ascertain the fact at the looking-glass. Even with the best disposition to be convinced, I could not see any striking beauty in my round face, with an unshaven beard and a nightcap, like a fool's cap at the top. I took off my nightcap. No! I must be content to be plain, but agreeable. All this I tell you in confidence. I would not have my little bit of vanity known for the world. I fell asleep towards morning. I was awakened by a tap at my door. It was Peggy: she put in a hand with a note. I took it.

“‘It is not from Miss Horsman?’ said I, half in joke, — half in very earnest fright.

“‘No, sir; Mr. Morgan’s man brought it.’

“I opened it. It ran thus:

“‘My dear Sir, — It is now nearly twenty years since I have had a little relaxation, and I find that my health requires it. I have also the utmost confidence in you, and I am sure this feeling is shared by our patients. I have, therefore, no scruple in putting in execution a hastily formed plan, and going to Chesterton to catch the early train on my way to Paris. If your accounts are good, I shall remain away probably a fortnight. Direct to Meurice’s.

“‘Yours, most truly,

“‘J. MORGAN.

“‘P. S. Perhaps it may be as well not to name where I am gone, especially to Miss Tomkinson.’

“He had deserted me. He — with only one report — had left me to stand my ground with three.

“‘Mrs. Rose’s kind regards, sir, and it’s nearly nine o’clock. Breakfast has been ready this hour, sir.’

“ ‘Tell Mrs. Rose I don’t want any breakfast. Or stay (for I was very hungry), I will take a cup of tea and some toast up here.’

“Peggy brought the tray to the door.

“ ‘I hope you’re not ill, sir?’ said she kindly.

“ ‘Not very. I shall be better when I get into the air.’

“ ‘Mrs. Rose seems sadly put about,’ said she, ‘she seems so grieved like.’

“I watched my opportunity, and went out by the side door in the garden.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

“I HAD intended to ask Mr. Morgan to call at the Vicarage, and give his parting explanation before they could hear the report. Now, I thought that if I could see Sophy, I would speak to her myself; but I did not wish to encounter the Vicar. I went along the lane at the back of the Vicarage, and came suddenly upon Miss Bullock. She coloured, and asked me if I would allow her to speak to me. I could only be resigned; but I thought I could probably set one report at rest by this conversation.

“She was almost crying.

“ ‘I must tell you, Mr. Harrison, I have watched you here in order to speak to you. I heard with the greatest regret of papa’s conversation with you yesterday.’ She was fairly crying. ‘I believe Mrs. Bullock finds me in her way, and wants to have me married. It is the only way in which I can account for such a complete misrepresentation as she had told papa. I don’t care for you, in the least, sir. You never paid me any attentions. You’ve been almost rude to me; and I have liked you the better. That’s to say, I never have liked you.’

“ ‘I am truly glad to hear what you say,’ answered I. ‘Don’t distress yourself. I was sure there was some mistake.’

“But she cried bitterly.

“ ‘It is so hard to feel that my marriage — my absence — is desired so earnestly at home. I dread every new acquaintance we form with any gentleman. It is sure to be the beginning of a

series of attacks on him, of which everybody must be aware, and to which they may think I am a willing party. But I should not much mind if it were not for the conviction that she wishes me so earnestly away. Oh, my own dear mamma, you would never —'

"She cried more than ever. I was truly sorry for her, and had just taken her hand, and began — 'My dear Miss Bullock —' when the door in the wall of the Vicarage garden opened. It was the Vicar letting out Miss Tomkinson, whose face was all swelled with crying. He saw me; but he did not bow, or make any sign. On the contrary, he looked down as from a severe eminence, and shut the door hastily. I turned to Miss Bullock.

"'I am afraid the Vicar has been hearing something to my disadvantage from Miss Tomkinson, and it is very awkward —' She finished my sentence, 'To have found us here together. Yes, but as long as we understand that we do not care for each other, it does not signify what people say.'

"'Oh, but to me it does,' said I! 'I may, perhaps, tell you — but do not mention it to a creature — I am attached to Miss Hutton.'

"'To Sophy! Oh, Mr. Harrison, I am so glad; she is such a sweet creature. Oh, I wish you joy!'

"'Not yet; I have never spoken about it.'

"'Oh, but it is certain to happen.' She jumped with a woman's rapidity to a conclusion. And then she began to praise Sophy. Never was a man yet who did not like to hear the praises of his mistress. I walked by her side; we came past the front of the Vicarage together. I looked up, and saw Sophy there, and she saw me.

"That afternoon she was sent away; sent to visit her aunt ostensibly; in reality, because of the reports of my conduct, which were showered down upon the Vicar, and one of which he saw confirmed by his own eyes."

CHAPTER XXIV.

"I HEARD of Sophy's departure as one heard of everything, soon after it had taken place. I did not care for the awkwardness of my situation, which had so perplexed and amused me in the morning. I felt that something was wrong; that Sophy was taken away from me. I sank into despair. If any body liked to marry me they might. I was willing to be sacrificed. I did not speak to Mrs. Rose. She wondered at me, and grieved over my coldness, I saw; but I had left off feeling anything. Miss Tomkinson cut me in the street; and it did not break my heart. Sophy was gone away; that was all I cared for. Where had they sent her to? Who was her aunt, that she should go and visit her? One day I met Lizzie, who looked as though she had been told not to speak to me, but could not help doing so.

"'Have you heard from your sister?' said I.

"'Yes.'

"'Where is she? I hope she is well.'

"'She is at the Leoms (I was not much wiser). Oh yes, she is very well. Fanny says she was at the Assembly last Wednesday, and danced all night with the officers.'

"I thought I would enter myself a member of the Peace Society at once. She was a little flirt, and a hard-hearted creature. I don't think I wished Lizzie good-bye."

CHAPTER XXV.

"WHAT most people would have considered a more serious evil than Sophy's absence, befell me. I found that my practice was falling off. The prejudice of the town ran strongly against me. Mrs. Munton told me all that was said. She heard it through Miss Horsman. It was said, — cruel little town, — that my negligence or ignorance had been the cause of Walter's death; that Miss Tyrrell had become worse under my treatment; and that John Brouncker was all but dead, if he was not quite, from my mismanagement. All Jack Marshland's jokes and revelations, which had, I thought, gone to oblivion, were

raked up to my discredit. He himself, formerly, to my astonishment, rather a favourite with the good people of Duncombe, was spoken of as one of my disreputable friends.

"In short, so prejudiced were the good people of Duncombe that I believe a very little would have made them suspect me of a brutal highway robbery, which took place in the neighbourhood about this time. Mrs. Munton told me, *à propos* of the robbery—that she had never yet understood the cause of my year's imprisonment in Newgate; she had no doubt, from what Mr. Morgan had told her, there was some good reason for it; but if I would tell her the particulars, she should like to know them.

"Miss Tomkinson sent for Mr. White, from Chesterton to see Miss Caroline; and, as he was coming over, all our old patients seemed to take advantage of it, and send for him too.

"But the worst of all was the Vicar's manner to me. If he had cut me, I could have asked him why he did so. But the freezing change in his behaviour was indescribable though bitterly felt. I heard of Sophy's gaiety from Lizzie. I thought of writing to her. Just then Mr. Morgan's fortnight of absence expired. I was wearied out by Mrs. Rose's tender vagaries, and took no comfort from her sympathy, which indeed I rather avoided. Her tears irritated, instead of grieving me. I wished I could tell her at once that I had no intention of marrying her."

CHAPTER XXVI.

"MR. MORGAN had not been at home above two hours before he was sent for to the Vicarage. Sophy had come back, and I had never heard of it. She had come home ill and weary, and longing for rest; and the *rest* seemed approaching with awful strides. Mr. Morgan forgot all his Parisian adventures, and all his terror of Miss Tomkinson, when he was sent for to see her. She was ill of a fever, which made fearful progress. When he told me, I wished to force the Vicarage door, if I might but see her. But I controlled myself; and only cursed my weak indecision, which had prevented my writing to her.

It was well I had no patients; they would have had but a poor chance of attention. I hung about Mr. Morgan, who might see her, and did see her. But from what he told me, I perceived that the measures he was adopting were powerless to check so sudden and violent an illness. Oh! if they would but let me see her! But that was out of the question. It was not merely that the Vicar had heard of my character as a gay Lothario, but that doubts had been thrown out of my medical skill. The accounts grew worse. Suddenly, my resolution was taken. Mr. Morgan's very regard for Sophy made him more than usually timid in his practice. I had my horse saddled, and galloped to Chesterton. I took the express train to town. I went to Dr. —. I told him every particular of the case. He listened; but shook his head. He wrote down a prescription; and recommended a new preparation, not yet in full use; a preparation of a poison, in fact.

“‘It may save her,’ said he. ‘It is a chance, in such a state of things as you describe. It must be given on the fifth day if the pulse will bear it. Crabbe makes up the preparation most skilfully. Let me hear from you, I beg.’

“I went to Crabbe’s, I begged to make it up myself; but my hands trembled, so that I could not weigh the quantities. I asked the young man to do it for me. I went, without touching food, to the station, with my medicine and my prescription in my pocket. Back we flew through the country. I sprang on Bay Maldon, which my groom had in waiting, and galloped across the country to Duncombe.

“But I drew bridle when I came to the top of the hill — the hill above the old hall, from which we catch the first glimpse of the town, for I thought within myself that she might be dead; and I dreaded to come near certainty. The hawthorns were out in the woods, the young lambs were in the meadows, the song of the thrushes filled the air; but it only made the thought the more terrible.

“‘What, if in this world of hope and life she lies dead?’ I heard the church bells soft and clear. I sickened to listen. Was it the passing bell? No! — it was ringing eight o’clock.

I put spurs to my horse, down hill as it was. We dashed into the town. I turned him, saddle and bridle, into the stable-yard, and went off to Mr. Morgan's.

"'Is she — ?' said I. 'How is she?'

"'Very ill. My poor fellow, I see how it is with you. She may live — but I fear. My dear sir, I am very much afraid.'

"I told him of my journey, and consultation with Dr. —, and showed him the prescription. His hands trembled as he put on his spectacles to read it.

"'This is a very dangerous medicine, sir,' said he, with his finger under the name of the poison.

"'It is a new preparation,' said I. 'Dr. — relies much upon it.'

"'I dare not administer it,' he replied. 'I have never tried it. It must be very powerful. I dare not play tricks in this case.'

"I believe I stamped with impatience; but it was all of no use. My journey had been in vain. The more I urged the imminent danger of the case requiring some powerful remedy, the more nervous he became.

"I told him I would throw up the partnership. I threatened him with that, though, in fact, it was only what I felt I ought to do, and had resolved upon before Sophy's illness, as I had lost the confidence of his patients. He only said —

"'I cannot help it, sir. I shall regret it for your father's sake; but I must do my duty. I dare not run the risk of giving Miss Sophy this violent medicine, — a preparation of a deadly poison.'

"I left him without a word. He was quite right in adhering to his own views, as I can see now; but, at the time, I thought him brutal and obstinate."

CHAPTER XXVII.

"I WENT home. I spoke rudely to Mrs. Rose, who awaited my return at the door. I rushed past, and locked myself in my room. I could not go to bed.

"The morning sun came pouring in, and enraged me, as everything did since Mr. Morgan refused. I pulled the blind down so violently that the string broke. What did it signify? The light might come in. What was the sun to me? And then I remembered that that sun might be shining on her, — dead.

"I sat down and covered my face. Mrs. Rose knocked at the door. I opened it. She had never been in bed, and had been crying too.

"'Mr. Morgan wants to speak to you, sir!'

"I rushed back for my medicine, and went to him. He stood at the door, pale and anxious.

"'She's alive, sir,' said he, 'but that's all. We have sent for Dr. Hamilton. I'm afraid he will not come in time. Do you know, sir, I think we should venture — with Dr. —'s sanction — to give her that medicine. It is but a chance; but it is the only one, I'm afraid.' He fairly cried before he had ended.

"'I've got it here,' said I, setting off to walk; but he could not go so fast.

"'I beg your pardon, sir,' said he, 'for my abrupt refusal last night.'

"'Indeed, sir,' said I; 'I ought much rather to beg your pardon. I was very violent.'

"'Oh! never mind! never mind! Will you repeat what Dr. — said?'

"I did so; and then I asked, with a meekness that astonished myself, if I might not go in and administer it.

"'No, sir,' said he, 'I'm afraid not. I am sure your good heart would not wish to give pain. Besides, it might agitate her, if she has any consciousness before death. In her delirium she has often mentioned your name; and, sir, I'm sure you won't name it again, as it may, in fact, be considered a professional secret; but I did hear our good Vicar speak a little strongly about you; in fact, sir, I did hear him curse you. You see the mischief it might make in the parish, I'm sure, if this were known.'

"I gave him the medicine, and watched him in, and saw the door shut. I hung about the place all day. Poor and rich all

came to inquire. The county people drove up in their carriages, — the halt and the lame came on their crutches. Their anxiety did my heart good. Mr. Morgan told me that she slept, and I watched Dr. Hamilton into the house. The night came on. She slept. I watched round the house. I saw the light high up, burning still and steady. Then I saw it moved. It was the crisis, in one way or other."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"MR. MORGAN came out. Good old man! The tears were running down his cheeks: he could not speak; but kept shaking my hands. I did not want words. I understood that she was better.

"Dr. Hamilton says, it was the only medicine that could have saved her. I was an old fool, sir. I beg your pardon. The Vicar shall know all. I beg your pardon, sir, if I was abrupt."

"Everything went on brilliantly from this time.

"Mr. Bullock called to apologise for his mistake, and consequent upbraiding. John Brouncker came home, brave and well.

"There was still Miss Tomkinson in the ranks of the enemy; and Mrs. Rose, too much, I feared, in the ranks of the friends."

CHAPTER XXIX.

"ONE night she had gone to bed, and I was thinking of going. I had been studying in the back room, where I went for refuge from her in the present position of affairs; (I read a good number of surgical books about this time, and also 'Vanity Fair;') when I heard a loud, long-continued knocking at the door, enough to waken the whole street. Before I could get to open it, I heard that well-known bass of Jack Marshland's, once heard never to be forgotten, pipe up the negro song,

"Who 's dat knocking at de door?"

"Though it was raining hard at the time, and I stood waiting to let him in, he would finish his melody in the open air; loud and clear along the street it sounded. I saw Miss Tomkinson's night-capped head emerge from a window. She called out 'Police! police!'

"Now there were no police, only a rheumatic constable in the town; but it was the custom of the ladies, when alarmed at night, to call an imaginary police, which had, they thought, an intimidating effect; but as every one knew the real state of the unwatched town, we did not much mind it in general. Just now, however, I wanted to regain my character. So I pulled Jack in, quavering as he entered.

"'You've spoilt a good shake,' said he, 'that's what you have. I'm nearly up to Jenny Lind; and you see I'm a nightingale, like her.'

"We sat up late; and I don't know how it was, but I told him all my matrimonial misadventures.

"'I thought I could imitate your hand pretty well,' said he. 'My word! it was a flaming valentine! No wonder she thought you loved her!'

"'So that was your doing, was it? Now I'll tell you what you shall do to make up for it. You shall write me a letter confessing your hoax — a letter that I can show.'

"'Give me pen and paper, my boy; you shall dictate. "With a deeply penitent heart —" will that do for a beginning?'

"I told him what to write; a simple, straightforward confession, of his practical joke. I enclosed it in a few lines of regret that, unknown to me, any of my friends should have so acted."

CHAPTER XXX.

"ALL this time I knew that Sophy was slowly recovering. One day I met Miss Bullock, who had seen her.

"'We have been talking about you,' said she, with a bright smile; for since she knew I disliked her, she felt quite at her

ease, and could smile very pleasantly. I understood that she had been explaining the misunderstanding about herself to Sophy; so that when Jack Marshland's note had been sent to Miss Tomkinson's, I thought myself in a fair way to have my character established in two quarters. But the third was my dilemma. Mrs. Rose had really so much of my true regard for her good qualities, that I disliked the idea of a formal explanation, in which a good deal must be said on my side to wound her. We had become very much estranged ever since I had heard of this report of my engagement to her. I saw that she grieved over it. While Jack Marshland stayed with us, I felt at my ease in the presence of a third person. But he told me confidentially he durst not stay long, for fear some of the ladies should snap him up, and marry him. Indeed I myself did not think it unlikely that he would snap one of them up if he could. For when we met Miss Bullock one day, and heard her hopeful, joyous account of Sophy's progress (to whom she was a daily visitor), he asked me who that bright-looking girl was? And when I told him she was the Miss Bullock of whom I had spoken to him, he was pleased to observe that he thought I had been a great fool, and asked me if Sophy had anything like such splendid eyes. He made me repeat about Miss Bullock's unhappy circumstances at home, and then became very thoughtful — a most unusual and morbid symptom in his case.

“Soon after he went, by Mr. Morgan's kind offices and explanations, I was permitted to see Sophy. I might not speak much; it was prohibited for fear of agitating her. We talked of the weather and the flowers; and we were silent. But her little white thin hand lay in mine; and we understood each other without words. I had a long interview with the Vicar afterwards; and came away glad and satisfied.

“Mr. Morgan called in the afternoon, evidently anxious, though he made no direct inquiries (he was too polite for that), to hear the result of my visit at the Vicarage. I told him to give me joy. He shook me warmly by the hand; and then rubbed his own together. I thought I would consult him about my di-

lemma with Mrs. Rose, who, I was afraid, would be deeply affected by my engagement.

" 'There is only one awkward circumstance,' said I,—'about Mrs. Rose.' I hesitated how to word the fact of her having received congratulations on her supposed engagement with me, and her manifest attachment; but, before I could speak, he broke in.

" 'My dear sir, you need not trouble yourself about that; she will have a home. In fact, sir,' said he, reddening a little, 'I thought it would, perhaps, put a stop to those reports connecting my name with Miss Tomkinson's, if I married some one else. I hoped it might prove an efficacious contradiction. And I was struck with admiration for Mrs. Rose's undying memory of her late husband. Not to be prolix, I have this morning obtained Mrs. Rose's consent to — to marry her, in fact, sir!' said he, jerking out the climax.

"Here was an event! Then Mr. Morgan had never heard the report about Mrs. Rose and me. (To this day, I think she would have taken me, if I had proposed.) So much the better.

"Marriages were in the fashion that year. Mr. Bullock met me one morning, as I was going to ride with Sophy. He and I had quite got over our misunderstanding, thanks to Jemima, and were as friendly as ever. This morning he was chuckling aloud as he walked.

" 'Stop, Mr. Harrison!' he said, as I went quickly past. 'Have you heard the news? Miss Horsman has just told me Miss Caroline has eloped with young Hoggins! She is ten years older than he is! How can her gentility like being married to a tallow-chandler? It is a very good thing for her, though,' he added, in a more serious manner; 'Old Hoggins is very rich; and though he's angry just now, he will soon be reconciled.'

"Any vanity I might have entertained on the score of the three ladies who were, at one time, said to be captivated by my charms, was being rapidly dispersed. Soon after Mr. Hoggins'

marriage, I met Miss Tomkinson face to face, for the first time since our memorable conversation. She stopped me, and said,

“ ‘Don’t refuse to receive my congratulations, Mr. Harrison, on your most happy engagement to Miss Hutton. I owe you an apology, too, for my behaviour when I last saw you at our house. I really did think Caroline was attached to you then; and it irritated me, I confess, in a very wrong and unjustifiable way. But I heard her telling Mr. Hoggins only yesterday that she had been attached to him for years; ever since he was in pinafores, she dated it from; and when I asked her afterwards how she could say so, after her distress on hearing that false report about you and Mrs. Rose, she cried, and said I never had understood her; and that the hysterics which alarmed me so much, were simply caused by eating pickled cucumber. I am very sorry for my stupidity, and improper way of speaking; but I hope we are friends now, Mr. Harrison, for I should wish to be liked by Sophy’s husband.’

“Good Miss Tomkinson! to believe the substitution of indigestion for disappointed affection. I shook her warmly by the hand; and we have been all right ever since. I think I told you she is baby’s godmother.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

“I HAD some difficulty in persuading Jack Marshland to be groomsman; but when he heard all the arrangements, he came. Miss Bullock was bridesmaid. He liked us all so well, that he came again at Christmas, and was far better behaved than he had been the year before. He won golden opinions indeed. Miss Tomkinson said he was a reformed young man. We dined all together at Mr. Morgan’s (the Vicar wanted us to go there; but, from what Sophy told me, Helen was not confident of the mince-meat, and rather dreaded so large a party). We had a jolly day of it. Mrs. Morgan was as kind and motherly as ever.

Miss Horsman certainly did set out a story that the Vicar was thinking of Miss Tomkinson for his second; or else, I think, we had no other report circulated in consequence of our happy, merry Christmas-day; and it is a wonder, considering how Jack Marshland went on with Jemima.

"Here Sophy came back from putting baby to bed; and Charles wakened up."

LIBBIE MARSH'S THREE ERAS.

ERA I.

VALENTINE'S DAY.

LAST November but one, there was a flitting in our neighbourhood; hardly a flitting, after all, for it was only a single person changing her place of abode from one lodging to another; and instead of a cartload of drawers and baskets, dressers and beds, with old king clock at the top of all, it was only one large wooden chest to be carried after the girl, who moved slowly and heavily along the streets, listless and depressed, more from the state of her mind than of her body. It was Libbie Marsh, who had been obliged to quit her room in Dean-street, because the acquaintances whom she had been living with were leaving Manchester. She tried to think herself fortunate in having met with lodgings rather more out of the town, and with those who were known to be respectable; she did indeed try to be contented, but in spite of her reason, the old feeling of desolation came over her, as she was now about to be thrown again entirely among strangers.

No. 2.—court, Albemarle-street, was reached at last, and the pace, slow as it was, slackened as she drew near the spot where she was to be left by the man who carried her box, for, trivial as her acquaintance with him was, he was not quite a stranger, as every one else was, peering out of their open doors, and satisfying themselves it was only “Dixon’s new lodger.”

Dixon’s house was the last on the left-hand side of the court. A high dead brick wall connected it with its opposite neighbour. All the dwellings were of the same monotonous pattern, and one

side of the court looked at its exact likeness opposite, as if it were seeing itself in a looking-glass.

Dixon's house was shut up, and the key left next door, but the woman in whose charge it was left knew that Libbie was expected, and came forward to say a few explanatory words, to unlock the door, and stir the dull grey ashes that were lazily burning in the grate: and then she returned to her own house, leaving poor Libbie standing alone with the great big chest in the middle of the house-place floor, with no one to say a word to (even a common-place remark would have been better than this dull silence), that could help her to repel the fast-coming tears.

Dixon and his wife, and their eldest girl, worked in factories, and were absent all day from the house: the youngest child, also a little girl, was boarded out on the week-days at the neighbour's where the door-key was deposited, but although busy making dirt-pies, at the entrance to the court, when Libbie came in, she was too young to care much about her parents' new lodger. Libbie knew that she was to sleep with the elder girl in the front bedroom, but, as you may fancy, it seemed a liberty even to go upstairs to take off her things, when no one was at home to marshal the way up the ladder-like steps. So she could only take off her bonnet, and sit down, and gaze at the now blazing fire, and think sadly on the past, and on the lonely creature she was in this wide world, — father and mother gone, her little brother long since dead — he would have been more than nineteen had he been alive, but she only thought of him as the darling baby; her only friends (to call friends) living far away at their new house: her employers kind enough people in their way, but too rapidly twirling round on this bustling earth to have leisure to think of the little work-woman, excepting when they wanted gowns turned, carpets mended, or household linen darned; and hardly even the natural though hidden hope of a young girl's heart, to cheer her on with the bright visions of a home of her own at some future day, where, loving and beloved, she might fulfil a woman's dearest duties.

For Libbie was very plain, as she had known so long that

the consciousness of it had ceased to mortify her. You can hardly live in Manchester without having some idea of your personal appearance: the factory lads and lasses take good care of that; and if you meet them at the hours when they are pouring out of the mills, you are sure to hear a good number of truths, some of them combined with such a spirit of impudent fun, that you can scarcely keep from laughing even at the joke against yourself. Libbie had often and often been greeted by such questions as — “How long is it since you were a beauty?” — “What would you take a day to stand in the fields to scare away the birds?” &c., for her to linger under any impression as to her looks.

While she was thus musing, and quietly crying, under the pictures her fancy had conjured up, the Dixons came dropping in, and surprised her with her wet cheeks and quivering lips.

She almost wished to have the stillness again that had so oppressed her an hour ago, they talked and laughed so loudly and so much, and hustled about so noisily over everything they did. Dixon took hold of one iron handle of her box, and helped her to bump it up-stairs, while his daughter Anne followed to see the unpacking, and what sort of clothes “little sewing body had gotten.” Mrs. Dixon rattled out her tea-things, and put the kettle on, fetched home her youngest child, which added to the commotion. Then she called Anne down-stairs, and sent her for this thing and that: eggs to put to the cream, it was so thin; ham, to give a relish to the bread and butter; some new bread, hot, if she could get it. Libbie heard all these orders, given at full pitch of Mrs. Dixon’s voice, and wondered at their extravagance, so different from the habits of the place where she had last lodged. But they were fine spinners, in the receipt of good wages; and confined all day in an atmosphere ranging from seventy-five to eighty degrees. They had lost all natural, healthy appetite for simple food, and, having no higher tastes, found their greatest enjoyment in their luxurious meals.

When tea was ready, Libbie was called down-stairs, with a rough but hearty invitation to share their meal; she sat mutely

at the corner of the tea table, while they went on with their own conversation about people and things she knew nothing about, till at length she ventured to ask for a candle, to go and finish her unpacking before bedtime, as she had to go out sewing for several succeeding days. But once in the comparative peace of her bed-room, her energy failed her, and she contented herself with locking her Noah's ark of a chest, and put out her candle, and went to sit by the window, and gaze out at the bright heavens; for ever and ever "the blue sky, that bends over all," sheds down a feeling of sympathy with the sorrowful at the solemn hours when the ceaseless stars are seen to pace its depths.

By and by her eye fell down to gazing at the corresponding window to her own, on the opposite side of the court; it was lighted, but the blind was drawn down: upon the blind she saw, first unconsciously, the constant weary motion of a little spectral shadow, a child's hand and arm — no more; long, thin fingers hanging down from the wrist, while the arm moved up and down, as if keeping time to the heavy pulses of dull pain. She could not help hoping that sleep would soon come to still that incessant, feeble motion; and now and then it did cease, as if the little creature had dropped into a slumber from very weariness; but presently the arm jerked up with the fingers clenched, as if with a sudden start of agony. When Anne came up to bed, Libbie was still sitting, watching the shadow, and she directly asked to whom it belonged.

"It will be Margaret Hall's lad. Last summer, when it was so hot, there was no biding with the window shut at nights, and theirs was open too: and many's the time he has waked me with his moans; they say he's been better sin' cold weather came."

"Is he always in bed? Whatten ails him?" asked Libbie.

"Summat's amiss wi' his backbone, folks say; he's better and worse, like. He's a nice little chap enough, and his mother's not that bad either; only my mother and her had words, so now we don't speak."

Lizzie Leigh.

Libbie went on watching, and when she next spoke, to ask who and what his mother was, Anne Dixon was fast asleep.

Time passed away, and as usual unveiled the hidden things. Libbie found out that Margaret Hall was a widow, who earned her living as a washerwoman; that the little suffering lad was her only child, her dearly beloved. That while she scolded, pretty nearly, everybody else, "till her name was up" in the neighbourhood for a termagant, to him she was evidently most tender and gentle. He lay alone on his little bed, near the window, through the day, while she was away toiling for a livelihood. But when Libbie had plain sewing to do at her lodgings, instead of going out to sew, she used to watch from her bed-room window for the time when the shadows opposite, by their mute gestures, told that the mother had returned to bend over her child, to smooth his pillow, to alter his position, to get him his nightly cup of tea. And often in the night Libbie could not help rising gently from bed, to see if the little arm was waving up and down, as was his accustomed habit when sleepless from pain.

Libbie had a good deal of sewing to do at home that winter, and whenever it was not so cold as to benumb her fingers, she took it up-stairs, in order to watch the little lad in her few odd moments of pause. On his better days he could sit up enough to peep out of his window, and she found he liked to look at her. Presently she ventured to nod to him across the court; and his faint smile, and ready nod back again, showed that this gave him pleasure. I think she would have been encouraged by this smile to have proceeded to a speaking acquaintance, if it had not been for his terrible mother, to whom it seemed to be irritation enough to know that Libbie was a lodger at the Dixon's for her to talk at her whenever they encountered each other, and to live evidently in wait for some good opportunity of abuse.

With her constant interest in him, Libbie soon discovered his great want of an object, on which to occupy his thoughts, and which might distract his attention, when alone through the long day, from the pain he endured. He was very fond of

flowers. It was November when she had first removed to her lodgings, but it had been very mild weather, and a few flowers yet lingered in the gardens, which the country people gathered into nosegays, and brought on market-days into Manchester. His mother had bought him a bunch of Michaelmas daisies the very day Libbie had become a neighbour, and she watched their history. He put them first in an old tea-pot, of which the spout was broken off and the lid lost; and he daily replenished the tea-pot from the jug of water his mother left near him to quench his feverish thirst. By and by, one or two of the constellation of lilac stars faded, and then the time he had hitherto spent in admiring, almost caressing them, was devoted to cutting off those flowers whose decay marred the beauty of the nosegay. It took him half the morning, with his feeble, languid motions, and his cumbrous old scissors, to trim up his diminished darlings. Then at last he seemed to think he had better preserve the few that remained by drying them; so they were carefully put between the leaves of the old Bible; and then, whenever a better day came, when he had strength enough to lift the ponderous book, he used to open the pages to look at his flower friends. In winter he could have no more living flowers to tend.

Libbie thought and thought, till at last an idea flashed upon her mind, that often made a happy smile steal over her face as she stitched away, and that cheered her through the solitary winter — for solitary it continued to be, though the Dixons were very good sort of people, never pressed her for payment, if she had had but little work to do that week; never grudged her a share of their extravagant meals, which were far more luxurious than she could have met with anywhere else, for her previously agreed payment in case of working at home; and they would fain have taught her to drink rum in her tea, assuring her that she should have it for nothing and welcome. But they were too touchy, too prosperous, too much absorbed in themselves, to take off Libbie's feeling of solitariness; not half as much as the little face by day, and the shadow by night, of him with whom she had never yet exchanged a word.

Her idea was this; her mother came from the east of England, where, as perhaps you know, they have the pretty custom of sending presents on St. Valentine's day, with the donor's name unknown, and of course the mystery constitutes half the enjoyment. The fourteenth of February was Libbie's birthday too, and many a year, in the happy days of old, had her mother delighted to surprise her with some little gift, of which she more than half guessed the giver, although each Valentine's day the manner of its arrival was varied. Since then the fourteenth of February had been the dreariest of all the year, because the most haunted by memory of departed happiness. But now, this year, if she could not have the old gladness of heart herself, she would try and brighten the life of another. She would save, and she would screw, but she would buy a canary and a cage for that poor little laddie opposite, who wore out his monotonous life with so few pleasures, and so much pain.

I doubt I may not tell you here of the anxieties and the fears, of the hopes and the self-sacrifices, — all, perhaps small in the tangible effect as the widow's mite, yet not the less marked by the viewless angels who go about continually among us, — which varied Libbie's life before she accomplished her purpose. It is enough to say it was accomplished. The very day before the fourteenth she found time to go with her half-guinea to a barber's who lived near Albemarle-street, and who was famous for his stock of singing-birds. There are enthusiasts about all sorts of things, both good and bad, and many of the weavers in Manchester know and care more about birds than any one would easily credit. Stubborn, silent, reserved men on many things, you have only to touch on the subject of birds to light up their faces with brightness. They will tell you who won the prizes at the last canary show, where the prize birds may be seen, and give you all the details of those funny, but pretty and interesting mimicries of great people's cattle shows. Among these amateurs, Emanuel Morris the barber was an oracle.

He took Libbie into his little back room, used for private shaving of modest men, who did not care to be exhibited in the

front shop decked out in the full glories of lather; and which was hung round with birds in rude wicker cages, with the exception of those who had won prizes, and were consequently honoured with gilt-wire prisons. The longer and thinner the body of the bird was, the more admiration it received, as far as external beauty went; and when in addition to this the colour was deep and clear, and its notes strong and varied, the more did Emanuel dwell upon its perfections. But these were all prize birds; and on inquiry, Libbie heard, with some little sinking at heart, that their price ran from one to two guineas.

"I'm not over-particular as to shape and colour," said she, "I should like a good singer, that's all!"

She dropped a little in Emanuel's estimation. However, he showed her his good singers, but all were above Libbie's means.

"After all, I don't think I care so much about the singing very loud, it's but a noise after all; and sometimes noise fidgets folks."

"They must be nesh folks as is put out with the singing o' birds," replied Emanuel, rather affronted.

"It's for one who is poorly," said Libbie, deprecatingly.

"Well," said he, as if considering the matter, "folk that are cranky, often take more to them as shows 'em love, than to them as is clever and gifted. Happen yo'd rather have this'n," opening a cage-door, and calling to a dull-coloured bird, sitting moped up in a corner, "Here, — Jupiter, Jupiter!"

The bird smoothed its feathers in an instant, and uttering a little note of delight, flew to Emanuel, putting his beak to his lips, as if kissing him, and then, perching on his head, it began a gurgling warble of pleasure, not by any means so varied or so clear as the song of the others, but which pleased Libbie more; for she was always one to find out she liked the gooseberries that were accessible, better than the grapes that were beyond her reach. The price too was just right, so she gladly took possession of the cage, and hid it under her cloak, preparatory to carrying it home. Emanuel meanwhile was giving her direc-

tions as to its food, with all the minuteness of one loving his subject.

"Will it soon get to know any one?" asked she.

"Give him two days only, and you and he'll be as thick as him and me are now. You've only to open his door, and call him, and he'll follow you round the room; but he'll first kiss you, and then perch on your head. He only wants larning, which I've no time to give him, to do many another accomplishment."

"What's his name? I did not rightly catch it."

"Jupiter,—it's not common; but the town's o'errun with Bobbies and Dickies, and as my birds are thought a bit out o' the way, I like to have better names for 'em, so I just picked a few out o' my lad's school books. It's just as ready, when you're used to it, to say Jupiter as Dicky."

"I could bring my tongue round to Peter better; would he answer to Peter?" asked Libbie, now on the point of departing.

"Happen he might; but I think he'd come readier to the three syllables."

On Valentine's day, Jupiter's cage was decked round with ivy leaves, making quite a pretty wreath on the wicker work; and to one of them was pinned a slip of paper, with these words, written in Libbie's best round hand: —

"From your faithful Valentine. Please take notice his name is Peter, and he'll come if you call him, after a bit."

But little work did Libbie do that afternoon, she was so engaged in watching for the messenger who was to bear her present to her little valentine, and run away as soon as he had delivered up the canary, and explained to whom it was sent.

At last he came; then there was a pause before the woman of the house was at liberty to take it upstairs. Then Libbie saw the little face flush up into a bright colour, the feeble hands tremble with delighted eagerness, the head bent down to try and make out the writing (beyond his power, poor lad, to read), the rapturous turning round of the cage in order to see the canary in every point of view, head, tail, wings, and feet; an intention in which Jupiter, in his uneasiness at being again

among strangers, did not second, for he hopped round so as continually to present a full front to the boy. It was a source of never wearying delight to the little fellow, till daylight closed in; he evidently forgot to wonder who had sent it him, in his gladness at his possession of such a treasure; and when the shadow of his mother darkened on the blind, and the bird had been exhibited, Libbie saw her do, what, with all her tenderness, seemed rarely to have entered into her thoughts — she bent down and kissed her boy, in a mother's sympathy with the joy of her child.

The canary was placed for the night between the little bed and window, and when Libbie rose once, to take her accustomed peep, she saw the little arm put fondly round the cage, as if embracing his new treasure even in his sleep. How Jupiter slept this first night, is quite another thing.

So ended the first day in Libbie's three eras in last year.

ERA II.

WHITSUNTIDE.

THE brightest, fullest daylight poured down into No. 2, — court, Albemarle-street, and the heat, even at the early hour of five, as at the noontide on the June days of many years past.

The court seemed alive, and merry with voices and laughter. The bed-room windows were open wide, and had been so all night, on account of the heat; and every now and then you might see a head and a pair of shoulders, simply encased in shirt sleeves, popped out, and you might hear the inquiry passed from one to the other, — “Well, Jack, and where art thee bound for?”

“Dunham!”

“Why, what an old-fashioned chap thou be’st. Thy grandad afore thee went to Dunham: but thou wert always a slow coach. I’m off to Alderley, — me and my missis.”

“Aye, that’s because there’s only thee and thy missis. Wait till thou hast gotten four childer, like me, and thou’ll be

glad enough to take 'em to Dunham, oud-fashioned way, for fourpence a-piece."

"I'd still go to Alderley; I'd not be bothered with my children; they should keep house at home."

A pair of hands, the person to whom they belonged invisible, boxed his ears on this last speech, in a very spirited, though playful manner, and the neighbours all laughed at the surprised look of the speaker, at this assault from an unseen foe. The man who had been holding conversation with him cried out —

"Sarved him right, Mrs. Slater; he knows nought about it yet, but when he gets them he'll be as loth to leave the babbies at home on a Whitsuntide as any on us. We shall live to see him in Dunham Park yet, wi' twins in his arms, and another pair on 'em clutching at daddy's coat-tails, let alone your share of youngsters, missis."

At this moment our friend Libbie appeared at her window, and Mrs. Slater, who had taken her discomfited husband's place, called out,

"Elizabeth Marsh, where are Dixons and you bound to?"

"Dixon's are not up yet; he said last night he'd take his holiday out in lying in bed. I'm going to the old-fashioned place, Dunham."

"Thou art never going by thyself, moping!"

"No. I'm going with Margaret Hall and her lad," replied Libbie, hastily withdrawing from the window, in order to avoid hearing any remarks on the associates she had chosen for her day of pleasure, — the scold of the neighbourhood, and her sickly, ailing child!

But Jupiter might have been a dove, and his ivy leaves an olive branch, for the peace he had brought, the happiness he had caused, to three individuals at least. For of course it could not long be a mystery who had sent little Frank Hall his valentine; nor could his mother long entertain her hard manner towards one who had given her child a new pleasure. She was shy, and she was proud, and for some time she struggled against the natural desire of manifesting her gratitude; but one

evening, when Libbie was returning home, with a bundle of work half as large as herself, as she dragged herself along through the heated streets, she was overtaken by Margaret Hall, her burden gently pulled from her, and her way home shortened, and her weary spirits soothed and cheered, by the outpourings of Margaret's heart; for the barrier of reserve once broken down, she had much to say, to thank her for days of amusement and happy employment for her lad, to speak of his gratitude, to tell of her hopes and fears,—the hopes and fears that made up the dates of her life. From that time, Libbie lost her awe of the termagant in interest for the mother, whose all was ventured in so frail a bark. From this time Libbie was a fast friend with both mother and son, planning mitigations for the sorrowful days of the latter as eagerly as poor Margaret Hall, and with far more success. His life had flickered up under the charm and excitement of the last few months. He even seemed strong enough to undertake the journey to Dunham, which Libbie had arranged as a Whitsuntide treat, and for which she and his mother had been hoarding up for several weeks. The canal boat left Knott-mill at six, and it was now past five; so Libbie let herself out very gently, and went across to her friends. She knocked at the door of their lodging-room, and, without waiting for an answer, entered.

Franky's face was flushed, and he was trembling with excitement,—partly with pleasure, but partly with some eager wish not yet granted.

"He wants sore to take Peter with him," said his mother to Libbie, as if referring the matter to her. The boy looked imploringly at her.

"He would like it, I know; for one thing, he'd miss me sadly, and chirrup for me all day long, he'd be so lonely. I could not be half so happy a-thinking on him, left alone here by himself. Then, Libbie, he's just like a Christian, so fond of flowers and green leaves, and them sort of things. He chirrups to me so when mother brings me a pennyworth of wall flowers to put round his cage. He would talk if he could, you

know; but I can tell what he means quite as one as if he spoke. Do let Peter go, Libbie; I'll carry him in my own arms."

So Jupiter was allowed to be of the party. Now Libbie had overcome the great difficulty of conveying Franky to the boat, by offering to "slay" for a coach, and the shouts and exclamations of the neighbours told them that their conveyance awaited them at the bottom of the court. His mother carried Franky, light in weight, though heavy in helplessness, and he would hold the cage, believing that he was thus redeeming his pledge, that Peter should be a trouble to no one. Libbie proceeded to arrange the bundle containing their dinner, as a support in the corner of the coach. The neighbours came out with many blunt speeches, and more kindly wishes, and one or two of them would have relieved Margaret of her burden, if she would have allowed it. The presence of that little crippled fellow seemed to obliterate all the angry feelings which had existed between his mother and her neighbours, and which had formed the politics of that little court for many a day.

And now they were fairly off! Franky bit his lips in attempted endurance of the pain the motion caused him; he winced and shrank, until they were fairly on a Macadamized thoroughfare, when he closed his eyes, and seemed desirous of a few minutes' rest. Libbie fell very shy, and very much afraid of being seen by her employers, "set up in a coach!" and so she hid herself in a corner, and made herself as small as possible; while Mrs. Hall had exactly the opposite feeling, and was delighted to stand up, stretching out of the window, and nodding to pretty nearly every one they met or passed on the foot-paths; and they were not a few, for the streets were quite gay, even at that early hour, with parties going to this or that railway station, or to the boats which crowded the canals on this bright holiday week; and almost every one they met seemed to enter into Mrs. Hall's exhilaration of feeling, and had a smile or nod in return. At last she plumped down by Libbie, and exclaimed, "I never was in a coach but once afore, and that was when I was a-going to be married. It's like heaven; and all done over with such beautiful gimp too!" con-

tinued she, admiring the lining of the vehicle. Jupiter did not enjoy it so much.

As if the holiday time, the lovely weather, and the "sweet hour of prime" had a genial influence, as no doubt they have, everybody's heart seemed softened towards poor Franky. The driver lifted him out with the tenderness of strength, and bore him carefully down to the boat; the people then made way, and gave him the best seat in their power,—or rather I should call it a couch, for they saw he was weary, and insisted on his lying down,—an attitude he would have been ashamed to assume without the protection of his mother and Libbie, who now appeared, bearing their baskets and carrying Peter.

Away the boat went, to make room for others, for every conveyance, both by land and water, is in requisition in Whitsun-week, to give the hard-worked crowds the opportunity of enjoying the charms of the country. Even every standing-place in the canal packets was occupied, and as they glided along, the banks were lined with people, who seemed to find it object enough to watch the boats go by, packed close and full with happy beings brimming with anticipations of a day's pleasure. The country through which they passed is as uninteresting as can well be imagined; but still it is the country: and the screams of delight from the children, and the low laughs of pleasure from the parents, at every blossoming tree that trailed its wreath against some cottage wall, or at the tufts of late primroses which lingered in the cool depths of grass along the canal banks, the thorough relish of everything, as if dreading to let the least circumstance of this happy day pass over without its due appreciation, made the time seem all too short, although it took two hours to arrive at a place only eight miles from Manchester. Even Franky, with all his impatience to see Dunham woods (which I think he confused with London, believing both to be paved with gold), enjoyed the easy motion of the boat so much, floating along, while pictures moved before him, that he regretted when the time came for landing among the soft, green meadows, that came sloping down to the dancing water's brim. His fellow-passengers carried him to the park, and

refused all payment, although his mother had laid by sixpence on purpose, as a recompense for this service.

"Oh, Libbie, how beautiful! Oh, mother, mother! is the whole world out of Manchester as beautiful as this? I did not know trees were like this! Such green homes for birds! Look, Peter! would not you like to be there, up among those boughs? But I can't let you go, you know, because you're my little bird brother, and I should be quite lost without you."

They spread a shawl upon the fine mossy turf, at the root of a beech tree, which made a sort of natural couch, and there they laid him, and bade him rest, in spite of the delight which made him believe himself capable of any exertion. Where he lay,—always holding Jupiter's cage, and often talking to him as to a playfellow,—he was on the verge of a green area, shut in by magnificent trees, in all the glory of their early foliage, before the summer heats had deepened their verdure into one rich, monotonous tint. And hither came party after party; old men and maidens, young men and children,—whole families trooped along after the guiding fathers, who bore the youngest in their arms, or astride upon their backs, while they turned round occasionally to the wives, with whom they shared some fond local remembrance. For years has Dunham Park been the favourite resort of the Manchester work-people; for more years than I can tell; probably ever since "the Duke," by his canals, opened out the system of cheap travelling. Its scenery, too, which presents such a complete contrast to the whirl and turmoil of Manchester; so thoroughly woodland, with its ancestral trees (here and there lightning blanched); its "verdurous walls;" its grassy walks leading far away into some glade, where you start at the rabbit rustling among the last year's fern, and where the wood-pigeon's call seems the only fitting and accordant sound. Depend upon it, this complete sylvan repose, this accessible quiet, this lapping the soul in green images of the country, forms the most complete contrast to a town's-person, and consequently has over such the greatest power to charm.

Presently Libbie found out she was very hungry. Now they

were but provided with dinner, which was of course to be eaten as near twelve o'clock as might be; and Margaret Hall, in her prudence, asked a working-man near to tell her what o'clock it was.

"Nay," said he, "I'll ne'er look at clock or watch to day. I'll not spoil my pleasure by finding out how fast it's going away. If thou'rt hungry, eat. I make my own dinner hour, and I have eaten mine an hour ago."

So they had their veal pies, and then found out it was only about half-past ten o'clock; by so many pleasurable events had that morning been marked. But such was their buoyancy of spirits, that they only enjoyed their mistake, and joined in the general laugh against the man who had eaten his dinner somewhere about nine. He laughed most heartily of all, till suddenly stopping, he said —

"I must not go on at this rate; laughing gives one such an appetite."

"Oh! if that's all," said a merry-looking man, lying at full length, and brushing the fresh scent out of the grass, while two or three little children tumbled over him, and crept about him, as kittens or puppies frolic with their parents; "if that's all, we'll have a subscription of eatables for them improvident folk as have eaten their dinner for their breakfast. Here's a sausage pasty and a handful of nuts for my share. Bring round a hat, Bob, and see what the company will give."

Bob carried out the joke, much to little Franky's amusement; and no one was so churlish as to refuse, although the contributions varied from a peppermint drop up to a veal pie and a sausage pasty.

"It's a thriving trade," said Bob, as he emptied his hatful of provisions on the grass by Libbie's side. "Besides, it's tip-top too to live on the public. Hark! what is that?"

The laughter and the chat were suddenly hushed, and mothers told their little ones to listen, — as, far away in the distance, now sinking and falling, now swelling and clear, came a ringing peal of children's voices, blended together in one of those psalm tunes, which we are all of us familiar with, and

which bring to mind the old, old days, when we, as wondering children, were first led to worship "Our Father," by those beloved ones, who have since gone to the more perfect worship. Holy was that distant choral praise, even to the most thoughtless; and when it, in fact, was ended, in the instant's pause, during which the ear awaits the repetition of the air, they caught the noontide hum and buzz of the myriads of insects who danced away their lives in the glorious day; they heard the swaying of the mighty woods in the soft but resistless breeze, and then again once more burst forth the merry jests and the shouts of childhood; and again the elder ones resumed their happy talk, as they lay or sat "under the greenwood tree." Fresh parties came dropping in; some laden with wild flowers, almost with branches of hawthorn, indeed; while one or two had made prizes of the earliest dog roses, and had cast away campion, stitchwort, ragged robin, all to keep the lady of the hedges from being obscured or hidden by the community.

One after another drew near to Franky, and looked on with interest as he lay sorting the flowers given to him. Happy parents stood by, with their household bands around them, in health and comeliness, and felt the sad prophecy of those shrivelled limbs, those wasted fingers, those lamp-like eyes, with their bright, dark lustre. His mother was too eagerly watching his happiness to read the meaning of those grave looks, but Libbie saw them and understood them; and a chill shudder went through her, even on that day, as she thought on the future.

"Aye! I thought we should give you a start!"

A start they did give, with their terrible slap on Libbie's back, as she sat idly grouping flowers, and following out her sorrowful thoughts. It was the Dixons. Instead of keeping their holiday by lying in bed, they and their children had roused themselves, and had come by the omnibus to the nearest point. For an instant the meeting was an awkward one, on account of the feud between Margaret Hall and Mrs. Dixon, but there was no long resisting of kindly mother Nature's soothings, at that holiday time, and in that lonely tranquil spot; or if they

could have been unheeded, the sight of Franky would have awed every angry feeling into rest, so changed was he since the Dixons had last seen him; and since he had been the Puck or Robin Goodfellow of the neighbourhood, whose marbles were always rolling under other people's feet, and whose top-strings were always hanging in nooses to catch the unwary. Yes, he, the feeble, mild, almost girlish-looking lad, had once been a merry, happy rogue, and as such often cuffed by Mrs. Dixon, the very Mrs. Dixon who now stood gazing with the tears in her eyes. Could she, in sight of him, the changed, the fading, keep up a quarrel with his mother?

"How long hast thou been here?" asked Dixon.

"Welly on for all day, answered Libbie.

"Hast never been to see the deer, or the king and queen oaks? Lord, how stupid."

His wife pinched his arm, to remind him of Franky's helpless condition, which of course tethered the otherwise willing feet. But Dixon had a remedy. He called Bob, and one or two others, and each taking a corner of the strong plaid shawl, they slung Franky as in a hammock, and thus carried him merrily along, down the wood paths, over the smooth, grassy turf, while the glimmering shine and shadow fell on his upturned face. The women walked behind, talking, loitering along, always in sight of the hammock; now picking up some green treasure from the ground, now catching at the low-hanging branches of the horse-chestnut. The soul grew much on this day, and in these woods, and all unconsciously, as souls do grow. They followed Franky's hammock-bearers up a grassy knoll, on the top of which stood a group of pine trees, whose stems looked like dark red gold in the sunbeams. They had taken Franky there to show him Manchester, for away in the blue plain, against which the woodland foreground cut with a soft clear line. Far, far away in the distance on that flat plain, you might see the motionless cloud of smoke hanging over a great town, and that was Manchester, — ugly, smoky Manchester, dear, busy, earnest, noble-working Manchester; where their children had been born, and where, perhaps, some lay buried; where

their homes were, and where God had cast their lives, and told them to work out their destiny.

"Hurrah! for oud smoke-jack!" cried Bob, putting Franky softly down on the grass, before he whirled his hat round, preparatory to a shout. "Hurrah! hurrah!" from all the men. "There's the rim of my hat lying like a quoit yonder," observed Bob quietly, as he replaced his brimless hat on his head with the gravity of a judge.

"Here's the Sunday-school childre a-coming to sit on this shady side, and have their buns and milk. Hark! they're singing the Infant School grace."

They sat close at hand, so that Franky could hear the words they sang, in rings of children, making, in their gay summer prints, newly donned for that week, garlands of little faces, all happy and bright upon that green hill-side. One little "Dot" of a girl came shily behind Franky, whom she had long been watching, and threw her half-bun at his side, and then ran away and hid herself, in very shame at the boldness of her own sweet impulse. She kept peeping from her screen at Franky all the time; and he meanwhile was almost too much pleased and happy to eat; the world was so beautiful, and men, women, and children all so tender and kind; so softened, in fact, by the beauty of this earth, so unconsciously touched by the Spirit of Love, which was the Creator of this lovely earth. But the day drew to an end; the heat declined; the birds once more began their warblings; the fresh scents again hung about plant, and tree, and grass, betokening the fragrant presence of the reviving dew, and — the boat time was near. As they trod the meadow-path once more, they were joined by many a party they had encountered during the day, all abounding in happiness, all full of the day's adventures. Long-cherished quarrels had been forgotten, new friendships formed. Fresh tastes and higher delights had been imparted that day. We have all of us our look, now and then, called up by some noble or loving thought (our highest on earth), which will be our likeness in heaven. I can catch the glance on many a face, the glancing light of the cloud of glory from heaven, "which is our home." That look was

present on many a hard-worked, wrinkled countenance, as they turned backwards to catch a longing, lingering look at Dunham woods, fast deepening into blackness of night, but whose memory was to haunt, in greenness and freshness, many a loom, and workshop, and factory, with images of peace and beauty.

That night, as Libbie lay awake, revolving the incidents of the day, she caught Franky's voice through the open windows. Instead of the frequent moan of pain, he was trying to recall the burden of one of the children's hymns, —

"Here we suffer grief and pain,
Here we meet to part again;
In Heaven we part no more.
Oh! that will be joyful," &c.

She recalled his question, the whispered question, to her, in the happiest part of the day. He asked Libbie, "Is Dunham like heaven? the people here are as kind as angels, and I don't want heaven to be more beautiful than this place. If you and mother would but die with me, I should like to die, and live always there!" She had checked him, for she feared he was impious; but now the young child's craving for some definite idea of the land to which his inner wisdom told him he was hastening, had nothing in it wrong, or even sorrowful, for

"In heaven we part no more."

ERA III.

MICHAELMAS.

THE church clocks had struck three; the crowds of gentlemen returning to business, after their early dinners, had disappeared within offices and warehouses; the streets were clear and quiet, and ladies were venturing to sally forth for their afternoon shoppings and their afternoon calls.

Slowly, slowly, along the streets, elbowed by life at every turn, a little funeral wound its quiet way. Four men bore along a child's coffin; two women with bowed heads followed meekly.

I need not tell you whose coffin it was, or who were those two mourners. All was now over with little Frank Hall: his romps, his games, his sickening, his suffering, his death. All was now over, but the Resurrection and the Life.

His mother walked as in a stupor. Could it be that he was dead! If he had been less of an object of her thoughts, less of a motive for her labours, she could sooner have realised it. As it was, she followed his poor, cast off, worn-out body as if she were borne along by some oppressive dream. If he were really dead, how could she be still alive?

Libbie's mind was far less stunned, and consequently far more active, than Margaret Hall's. Visions, as in a phantasmagoria, came rapidly passing before her — recollections of the time (which seemed now so long ago) when the shadow of the feebly-waving arm first caught her attention; of the bright, strangely isolated day at Dunham Park, where the world had seemed so full of enjoyment, and beauty, and life; of the long-continued heat, through which poor Franky had panted away his strength in the little close room, where there was no escaping the hot rays of the afternoon sun; of the long nights when his mother and she had watched by his side, as he moaned continually, whether awake or asleep; of the fevered moaning slumber of exhaustion; of the pitiful little self-upbraidings for his own impatience of suffering, only impatient in his own eyes — most true and holy patience in the sight of others; and then the fading away of life, the loss of power, the increased unconsciousness, the lovely look of angelic peace, which followed the dark shadow on the countenance, where was he — what was he now?

And so they laid him in his grave, and heard the solemn funeral words; but far off in the distance, as if not addressed to them.

Margaret Hall bent over the grave to catch one last glance — she had not spoken, nor sobbed, nor done aught but shiver now and then, since the morning; but now her weight bore more heavily on Libbie's arm, and without sigh or sound she fell an unconscious heap on the piled-up gravel. They helped Libbie

to bring her round; but long after her half-opened eyes and altered breathings showed that her senses were restored, she lay, speechless and motionless, without attempting to rise from her strange bed, as if the earth contained nothing worth even that trifling exertion.

At last Libbie and she left that holy, consecrated spot, and bent their steps back to the only place more consecrated still; where he had rendered up his spirit; and where memories of him haunted each common, rude piece of furniture that their eyes fell upon. As the woman of the house opened the door, she pulled Libbie on one side, and said —

“Anne Dixon has been across to see you; she wants to have a word with you.”

“I cannot go now,” replied Libbie, as she pushed hastily along, in order to enter the room (*his room*), at the same time with the childless mother: for, as she had anticipated, the sight of that empty spot, the glance at the uncurtained open window, letting in the fresh air, and the broad rejoicing light of day, where all had so long been darkened and subdued, unlocked the waters of the fountain, and long and shrill were the cries for her boy that the poor woman uttered.

“Oh! dear Mrs. Hall,” said Libbie, herself drenched in tears, “do not take on so badly; I’m sure it would grieve *him* sore if he were alive, and you know he is — Bible tells us so; and may be he’s here, watching how we go on without him, and hoping we don’t fret over much.”

Mrs. Hall’s sobs grew worse and more hysterical.

“Oh! listen,” said Libbie, once more struggling against her own increasing agitation. “Listen! there’s Peter chirping as he always does when he’s put about, frightened like; and you know he that’s gone could never abide to hear the canary chirp in that shrill way.”

Margaret Hall did check herself, and curb her expressions of agony, in order not to frighten the little creature he had loved; and as her outward grief subsided, Libbie took up the large old Bible, which fell open at the never-failing comfort of the fourteenth chapter of St. John’s Gospel.

How often these large family Bibles do open at that chapter! as if, unused in more joyous and prosperous times, the soul went home to its words of loving sympathy when weary and sorrowful, just as the little child seeks the tender comfort of its mother in all its griefs and cares.

And Margaret put back her wet, ruffled, grey hair, from her heated, tear-stained, woeful face, and listened with such earnest eyes, trying to form some idea of the "Father's house," where her boy had gone to dwell.

They were interrupted by a low tap at the door. Libbie went. "Anne Dixon has watched you home, and wants to have a word with you," said the woman of the house, in a whisper. Libbie went back, and closed the book with a word of explanation to Margaret Hall, and then ran downstairs, to learn the reason of Anne's anxiety to see her.

"Oh Libbie!" she burst out with, and then, checking herself with the remembrance of Libbie's last solemn duty, "how's Margaret Hall? But, of course, poor thing, she'll fret a bit at first; she'll be some time coming round, mother says, seeing it's as well that poor lad is taken; for he'd always ha' been a cripple, and a trouble to her—he was a fine lad once, too."

She had come full of another and a different subject; but the sight of Libbie's sad, weeping face, and the quiet, subdued tone of her manner, made her feel it awkward to begin on any other theme than the one which filled up her companion's mind. To her last speech Libbie answered sorrowfully—

"No doubt, Anne, it's ordered for the best; but oh! don't call him, don't think he could ever ha' been, a trouble to his mother, though he were a cripple. She loved him all the more for each thing she had to do for him.—I am sure I did." Libbie cried a little behind her apron. Anne Dixon felt still more awkward in introducing the discordant subject.

"Well! 'Flesh is grass,' Bible says," and having fulfilled the etiquette of quoting a text if possible, if not of making a moral observation on the fleeting nature of earthly things, she thought she was at liberty to pass on to her real errand.

"You must not go on moping yourself, Libbie Marsh. What

I wanted special for to see you this afternoon, was to tell you you must come to my wedding to-morrow. Nanny Dawson has fallen sick, and there 's none as I should like to have bridesmaid in her place as well as you."

"To-morrow! Oh, I cannot, — indeed I cannot."

"Why not?"

Libbie did not answer, and Anne Dixon grew impatient.

"Surely, in the name o' goodness, you 're never going to baulk yourself of a day's pleasure for the sake of yon little cripple that 's dead and gone!"

"No, — it 's not baulking myself of — don't be angry, Anne Dixon, with him, please; but I don't think it would be pleasure to me, — I don't feel as if I could enjoy it; thank you all the same. But I did love that little lad very dearly — I did," sobbing a little, "and I can't forget him and make merry so soon."

"Well — I never!" exclaimed Anne, almost angrily.

"Indeed, Anne, I feel your kindness, and you and Bob have my best wishes, — that 's what you have; but even if I went, I should be thinking all day of him, and of his poor, poor mother, and they say it's bad to think very much on them that 's dead at a wedding."

"Nonsense," said Anne, "I 'll take the risk of the ill-luck. After all, what is marrying? Just a spree, Bob says. He often says he does not think I shall make him a good wife, for I know nought about house matters, wi' working in a factory; but he says he 'd rather be uneasy wi' me, than easy wi' anybody else. There 's love for you! And I tell him I 'd rather have him tipsy, than any one else sober."

"Oh! Anne Dixon, hush; you don't know yet what it is to have a drunken husband. I have seen something of it: father used to get fuddled, and in the long run it killed mother, let alone — Oh! Anne, God above only knows what the wife of a drunken man has to bear. Don't tell," said she, lowering her voice, "but father killed our little baby in one of his bouts; mother never looked up again, nor father either for that matter, only his was in a different way. Mother will have gotten to little

Jemmie now, and they 'll be so happy together, — and perhaps Franky too. Oh!" said she, recovering herself from her train of thought, "never say aught lightly of the wife's lot, whose husband is given to drink."

"Dear, what a preachment. I tell you what, Libbie, you 're as born an old maid as ever I saw. You 'll never be married to either drunken or sober."

Libbie's face went rather red, but without losing its meek expression.

"I know that as well as you can tell me; and more reason, therefore, as God has seen fit to keep me out of woman's natural work, I should try and find work for myself. I mean," seeing Anne Dixon's puzzled look, "that as I know I 'm never likely to have a home of my own, or a husband that would look to me to make all straight, or children to watch over or care for, all which I take to be woman's natural work, I must not lose time in fretting and fidgetting after marriage, but just look about me for somewhat else to do. I can see many a one misses it in this. They will hanker after what is ne'er likely to be theirs, instead of facing it out, and settling down to be old maids; and, as old maids, just looking round for the odd jobs God leaves in the world for such as old maids to do. There 's plenty of such work, and there 's the blessing of God on them as does it." Libbie was almost out of breath at this outpouring of what had long been her inner thoughts.

"That 's all very true, I make no doubt, for them as is to be old maids; but as I 'm not, please God to-morrow comes, you might have spared your breath to cool your porridge. What I want to know is, whether you 'll be bridesmaid to-morrow or not. Come, now do; it will do you good, after all your working, and watching, and slaving yourself for that poor Franky Hall."

"It was one of my odd jobs," said Libbie, smiling, though her eyes were brimming over with tears; "but, dear Anne," said she, recovering herself, "I could not do it to-morrow, indeed I could not."

"And I can't wait," said Anne Dixon, almost sulkily, "Bob

and I put it off from to-day, because of the funeral, and Bob had set his heart on its being on Michaelmas day; and mother says the goose won't keep beyond to-morrow. Do come: father finds eatables, and Bob finds drink, and we shall be so jolly! and after we've been to church, we're to walk round the town in pairs, white satin ribbon in our bonnets, and refreshments at any public house we like, Bob says. And after dinner there's to be a dance. Don't be a fool; you can do no good by staying. Margaret Hall will have to go out washing, I'll be bound."

"Yes, she must go to Mrs. Wilkinson's, and, for that matter, I must go working too. Mrs. Williams has been after me to make her girl's winter things ready; only I could not leave Franky, he clung so to me."

"Then you won't be bridesmaid! is that your last word?"

"It is; you must not be angry with me, Anne Dixon," said Libbie, deprecatingly.

But Anne was gone without a reply.

With a heavy heart Libbie mounted the little staircase, for she felt how ungracious her refusal of Anne's kindness must appear, to one who understood so little the feelings which rendered her acceptance of it a moral impossibility.

On opening the door, she saw Margaret Hall, with the Bible open on the table before her. For she had puzzled out the place where Libbie was reading, and, with her finger under the line, was spelling out the words of consolation, piecing the syllables together aloud, with the earnest anxiety of comprehension with which a child first learns to read. So Libbie took the stool by her side, before she was aware that any one had entered the room.

"What did she want you for?" asked Margaret. "But I can guess; she wanted you to be at th' wedding that is to come off this week, they say. Aye, they'll marry, and laugh, and dance, all as one as if my boy was alive," said she, bitterly. "Well, he was neither kith nor kin of yours, so I maun try and be thankful for what you've done for him, and not wonder at your forgetting him afore he's well settled in his grave."

"I never can forget him, and I'm not going to the wedding,"

said Libbie, quietly, for she understood the mother's jealousy of her dead child's claims.

"I must go work at Mrs. Williams' to-morrow," she said, in explanation, for she was unwilling to boast of her tender, fond regret, which had been her principal motive for declining Anne's invitation.

"And I mun go washing, just as if nothing had happened," sighed forth Mrs. Hall, "and I mun come home at night, and find his place empty, and all still where I used to be sure of hearing his voice ere ever I got up the stair: no one will ever call me mother again." She fell crying pitifully, and Libbie could not speak for her own emotion for some time. But during this silence she put the keystone in the arch of thoughts she had been building up for many days; and when Margaret was again calm in her sorrow, Libbie said, "Mrs. Hall, I should like — would you like me to come for to live here altogether?"

Margaret Hall looked up with a sudden light in her countenance, which encouraged Libbie to go on.

"I could sleep with you, and pay half, you know; and we should be together in the evenings; and her as was home first would watch for the other, and" (dropping her voice) "we could talk of him at nights, you know."

She was going on, but Mrs. Hall interrupted her.

"Oh, Libbie Marsh! and can you really think of coming to live wi' me? I should like it above — but no! it must not be; you've no notion on what a creature I am, at times; more like a mad one when I'm in a rage, and I cannot keep it down. I seem to get out of bed wrong side in the morning, and I must have my passion out with the first person I meet. Why Libbie," said she, with a doleful look of agony on her face, "I even used to fly out on him, poor sick lad as he was, and you may judge how little you can keep it down frae that. No, you must not come. I must live alone now," sinking her voice into the low tones of despair. But Libbie's resolution was brave and strong. "I'm not afraid," said she, smiling. "I know you better than you know yourself, Mrs. Hall. I've seen you try of late to keep it down, when you've been boiling over, and I think

you 'll go on a-doing so. And at any rate, when you 've had your fit out, you 're very kind, and I can forget if you 've been a bit put out. But I 'll try not to put you out. Do let me come: I think *he* would like us to keep together. I 'll do my very best to make you comfortable."

"It 's me! it 's me as will be making your life miserable with my temper; or else, God knows, how my heart clings to you. You and me is folk alone in the world, for we both loved one who is dead, and who had none else to love him. If you will live with me, Libbie, I 'll try as I never did afore to be gentle and quiet-tempered. Oh! will you try me, Libbie Marsh?" So out of the little grave there sprang a hope and a resolution, which made life an object to each of the two.

When Elizabeth Marsh returned home the next evening from her day's labours, Anne (Dixon no longer) crossed over, all in her bridal finery, to endeavour to induce her to join the dance going on in her father's house.

"Dear Anne, this is good of you, a-thinking of me to-night," said Libbie, kissing her, "and though I cannot come,—I 've promised Mrs. Hall to be with her,—I shall think on you, and I trust you 'll be happy. I have got a little needle-case I looked out for you, stay, here it is,—I wish it were more — only —"

"Only, I know what. You 've been a-spending all your money in nice things for poor Franky. Thou 'rt a real good un, Libbie, and I 'll keep your needle-book to my dying day, that I will." Seeing Anne in such a friendly mood, emboldened Libbie to tell her of her change of place; of her intention of lodging henceforward with Margaret Hall.

"Thou never will! Why father and mother are as fond of thee as can be; they 'll lower thy rent if that 's what it is — and thou knowst they never grudge thee bit or drop. And Margaret Hall, of all folk, to lodge wi'! She 's such a tartar! Sooner than not have a quarrel, she 'd fight right hand against left. Thou 'lt have no peace of thy life. What on earth can make you think of such a thing, Libbie Marsh?"

"She 'll be so lonely without me," pleaded Libbie. "I 'm

sure I could make her happier, even if she did scold me a bit now and then, than she 'd be a living alone, and I 'm not afraid of her; and I mean to do my best not to vex her: and it will ease her heart, may be, to talk to me at times about Franky. I shall often see your father and mother, and I shall always thank them for their kindness to me. But they have you and little Mary, and poor Mrs. Hall has no one."

Anne could only repeat, "Well, I never!" and hurry off to tell the news at home.

But Libbie was right. Margaret Hall is a different woman to the scold of the neighbourhood she once was; touched and softened by the two purifying angels, Sorrow and Love. And it is beautiful to see her affection, her reverence, for Libbie Marsh. Her dead mother could hardly have cared for her more tenderly than does the hard-hearted washerwoman, not long ago so fierce and unwomanly. Libbie, herself, has such peace shining on her countenance, as almost makes it beautiful, as she tenders the services of a daughter to Franky's mother, no longer the desolate lonely orphan, a stranger on the earth.

Do you ever read the moral, concluding sentence of a story? I never do, but I once (in the year 1811, I think), heard of a deaf old lady, living by herself, who did; and as she may have left some descendants with the same amiable peculiarity, I will put in, for their benefit, what I believe to be the secret of Libbie's peace of mind, the real reason why she no longer feels oppressed at her own loneliness in the world, —

She has a purpose in life; and that purpose is a holy one.

THE SEXTON'S HERO.

THE afternoon sun shed down his glorious rays on the grassy church-yard, making the shadow, cast by the old yew-tree under which we sat, seem deeper and deeper by contrast. The everlasting hum of myriads of summer insects made luxurious lullaby.

Of the view that lay beneath our gaze, I cannot speak adequately. The foreground was the grey-stone wall of the vicarage-garden; rich in the colouring made by innumerable lichens, ferns, ivy of most tender green and most delicate tracery, and the vivid scarlet of the crane's-bill, which found a home in every nook and crevice,— and at the summit of that old wall flaunted some unpruned tendrils of the vine, and long flower-laden branches of the climbing rose-tree, trained against the inner side. Beyond, lay meadow green, and mountain grey, and the blue dazzle of Morecambe Bay, as it sparkled between us and the more distant view.

For a while we were silent, living in sight and murmuring sound. Then Jeremy took up our conversation where, suddenly feeling weariness, as we saw that deep green shadowy resting-place, we had ceased speaking a quarter of an hour before.

It is one of the luxuries of holiday-time that thoughts are not rudely shaken from us by outward violence of hurry and busy impatience, but fall maturely from our lips in the sunny leisure of our days. The stock may be bad, but the fruit is ripe.

“How would you then define a hero?” I asked.

There was a long pause, and I had almost forgotten my question in watching a cloud-shadow floating over the far-away hills, when Jeremy made answer:

"My idea of a hero is one who acts up to the highest idea of duty he has been able to form, no matter at what sacrifice. I think that by this definition, we may include all phases of character, even to the heroes of old, whose sole (and to us, low) idea of duty consisted in personal prowess."

"Then you would even admit the military heroes?" asked I.

"I would; with a certain kind of pity for the circumstances which had given them no higher ideas of duty. Still, if they sacrificed self to do what they sincerely believed to be right, I do not think I could deny them the title of hero."

"A poor, unchristian heroism, whose manifestation consists in injury to others!" I said.

We were both startled by a third voice.

"If I might make so bold, sir," — and then the speaker stopped.

It was the Sexton, whom, when we first arrived, we had noticed, as an accessory to the scene, but whom we had forgotten, as much as though he were as inanimate as one of the moss-covered headstones.

"If I might be so bold," said he again, waiting leave to speak. Jeremy bowed in deference to his white, uncovered head. And so encouraged, he went on.

"What that gentleman" (alluding to my last speech) "has just now said, brings to my mind one who is dead and gone this many a year ago. I may be have not rightly understood your meaning, gentlemen, but as far as I could gather it, I think you'd both have given in to thinking poor Gilbert Dawson a hero. At any rate," said he, heaving a long quivering sigh, "I have reason to think him so."

"Will you take a seat, sir, and tell us about him?" said Jeremy, standing up until the old man was seated. I confess I felt impatient at the interruption.

"It will be forty-five year come Martinmas," said the Sexton, sitting down on a grassy mound at our feet, "since I finished my 'prenticeship, and settled down at Lindal. You can see Lindal, sir, at evenings and mornings across the bay; a little to the

right of Grange; at least, I used to see it many a time and oft, afore my sight grew so dark: and I have spent many a quarter of an hour a-gazing at it far away, and thinking of the days I lived there, till the tears came so thick to my eyes, I could gaze no longer. I shall never look upon it again, either far-off or near, but you may see it, both ways, and a terrible bonny spot it is. In my young days, when I went to settle there, it was full of as wild a set of young fellows as ever were clapped eyes on; all for fighting, poaching, quarrelling, and such like work. I were startled myself when I first found what a set I were among, but soon I began to fall into their ways, and I ended by being as rough a chap as any on 'em. I'd been there a matter of two year, and were reckoned by most the cock of the village, when Gilbert Dawson, as I was speaking of, came to Lindal. He were about as strapping a chap as I was, (I used to be six feet high, though now I'm so shrunk and doubled up,) and, as we were like in the same trade, (both used to prepare osiers and wood for the Liverpool coopers, who get a deal of stuff from the copses round the bay, sir,) we were thrown together, and took mightily to each other. I put my best leg foremost to be equal with Gilbert, for I'd had some schooling, though since I'd been at Lindal I'd lost a good part of what I'd learnt; and I kept my rough ways out of sight for a time, I felt so ashamed of his getting to know them. But that did not last long. I began to think he fancied a girl I dearly loved, but who had always held off from me. Eh! but she was a pretty one in those days! There's none like her now. I think I see her going along the road with her dancing tread, and shaking back her long yellow curls, to give me or any other young fellow a saucy word; no wonder Gilbert was taken with her, for all he was grave, and she so merry and light. But I began to think she liked him again; and then my blood was all afire. I got to hate him for everything he did. Afore-time I had stood by, admiring to see him, how he leapt, and what a quoiter and cricketer he was. And now I ground my teeth with hatred whene'er he did a thing which caught Letty's eye. I could read it in her look that she liked him, for all she held herself just as

high with him as with all the rest. Lord God forgive me! how I hated that man."

He spoke as if the hatred were a thing of yesterday, so clear within his memory were shown the actions and feelings of his youth. And then he dropped his voice, and said:

"Well! I began to look out to pick a quarrel with him, for my blood was up to fight him. If I beat him, (and I were a rare boxer in those days,) I thought Letty would cool towards him. So one evening at quoits (I'm sure I don't know how or why, but large doings grow out of small words) I fell out with him, and challenged him to fight. I could see he were very wroth by his colour coming and going — and, as I said before, he were a fine active young fellow. But all at once he drew in, and said he would not fight. Such a yell as the Lindal lads, who were watching us, set up! I hear it yet. I could na' help but feel sorry for him, to be so scorned, and I thought he'd not rightly taken my meaning, and I'd give him another chance; so I said it again, and dared him, as plain as words could speak, to fight out the quarrel. He told me then, he had no quarrel against me; that he might have said something to put me up; he did not know that he had, but that if he had, he asked pardon; but that he would not fight no-how.

"I was so full of scorn at his cowardliness, that I was vexed I'd given him the second chance, and I joined in the yell that was set up, twice as bad as before. He stood it out, his teeth set, and looking very white, and when we were silent for want of breath, he said out loud, but in a hoarse voice, quite different from his own,

"'I cannot fight, because I think it is wrong to quarrel, and use violence.'

"Then he turned to go away; I were so beside myself with scorn and hate, that I called out,

"'Tell truth, lad, at least; if thou dare not fight, dunnot go and tell a lie about it. Mother's moppet is afraid of a black eye, pretty dear. It shannot be hurt, but it munnot tell lies.'

"Well, they laughed, but I could not laugh. It seemed such a thing for a stout young chap to be a coward, and afraid!

"Before the sun had set, it was talked of all over Lindal, how I had challenged Gilbert to fight, and how he 'd denied me; and the folks stood at their doors, and looked at him going up the hill to his home, as if he 'd been a monkey or a foreigner,— but no one wished him good e'en. Such a thing as refusing to fight had never been heard of afore at Lindal. Next day, however, they had found voice. The men muttered the word 'coward' in his hearing, and kept aloof; the women tittered as he passed, and the little impudent lads and lasses shouted out, 'How long is it sin' thou turned quaker?' 'Good-bye, Jonathan Broad-brim,' and such like jests.

"That evening I met him, with Letty by his side, coming up from the shore. She was almost crying as I came upon them at the turn of the lane; and looking up in his face, as if begging him something. And so she was, she told me it after. For she did really like him; and could not abide to hear him scorned by every one for being a coward; and she, coy as she was, all but told him that very night that she loved him, and begged him not to disgrace himself, but fight me as I 'd dared him to. When he still stuck to it he could not, for that it was wrong, she was so vexed and mad-like at the way she 'd spoken, and the feelings she 'd let out to coax him, that she said more stinging things about his being a coward than all the rest put together, (according to what she told me, sir, afterwards,) and ended by saying she 'd never speak to him again, as long as she lived; — she did once again though, — her blessing was the last human speech that reached his ear in his wild death-struggle.

"But much happened afore that time. From the day I met them walking, Letty turned towards me; I could see a part of it was to spite Gilbert, for she 'd be twice as kind when he was near, or likely to hear of it; but by-and-by she got to like me for my own sake, and it was all settled for our marriage. Gilbert kept aloof from every one, and fell into a sad, careless way. His very gait was changed; his step used to be brisk and sounding, and now his foot lingered heavily on the ground. I used to try

and daunt him with my eye, but he would always meet my look in a steady, quiet way, for all so much about him was altered; the lads would not play with him; and as soon as he found he was to be slighted by them whenever he came to quoiting or cricket, he just left off coming.

"The old clerk was the only one he kept company with; or perhaps, rightly to speak, the only one who would keep company with him. They got so thick at last, that old Jonas would say, Gilbert had gospel on his side, and did no more than gospel told him to do; but we none of us gave much credit to what he said, more by token our vicar had a brother, a colonel in the army; and as we threeped it many a time to Jonas, would he set himself up to know the gospel better than the vicar? that would be putting the cart afore the horse, like the French radicals. And if the vicar had thought quarrelling and fighting wicked, and again the Bible, would he have made so much work about all the victories, that were as plenty as blackberries at that time of day, and kept the little bell of Lindal church for ever ringing; or would he have thought so much of 'my brother the colonel,' as he was always talking on?

"After I was married to Letty I left off hating Gilbert. I even kind of pitied him — he was so scorned and slighted; and for all he'd a bold look about him, as if he were not ashamed, he seemed pining and shrunk. It's a wearing thing to be kept at arm's length by one's kind; and so Gilbert found it, poor fellow. The little children took to him, though; they'd be round about him like a swarm of bees — them as was too young to know what a coward was, and only felt that he was ever ready to love and to help them, and was never loud or cross, however naughty they might be. After a while we had our little one too; such a blessed darling she was, and dearly did we love her; Letty in especial, who seemed to get all the thought I used to think sometimes she wanted, after she had her baby to care for.

"All my kin lived on this side the bay, up above Kellet. Jane (that's her that lies buried near yon white rose-tree) was to be married, and nought would serve her but that Letty and I must come to the wedding; for all my sisters loved Letty, she

had such winning ways with her. Letty did not like to leave her baby, nor yet did I want her to take it; so, after a talk, we fixed to leave it with Letty's mother for the afternoon. I could see her heart ached a bit, for she'd never left it till then, and she seemed to fear all manner of evil, even to the French coming and taking it away. Well! we borrowed a shandry, and harnessed my old grey mare, as I used in th' cart, and set off as grand as King George across the Sands about three o'clock, for you see it were high water about twelve, and we'd to go and come back same tide, as Letty could not leave her baby for long. It were a merry afternoon, were that; — last time I ever saw Letty laugh heartily; and for that matter, last time I ever laughed downright hearty myself. The latest crossing time fell about nine o'clock, and we were late at starting. Clocks were wrong; and we'd a piece of work chasing a pig father had given Letty to take home; we bagged him at last, and he screeched and screeched in the back part o' th' shandry, and we laughed and they laughed; and in the midst of all the merriment the sun set, and that sober'd us a bit, for then we knew what time it was. I whipped the old mare, but she was a deal beener than she was in the morning, and would neither go quick up nor down the brows, and they're not a few 'twixt Kellet and the shore. On the sands it were worse. They were very heavy, for the fresh had come down after the rains we'd had. Lord! how I did whip the poor mare, to make the most of the red light as yet lasted. You, may-be, don't know the Sands, gentlemen. From Bolton side, where we started from, it is better than six mile to Cart-lane, and two channels to cross, let alone holes and quick-sands. At the second channel from us the guide waits, all during crossing time from sun-rise to sun-set; — but for the three hours on each side high water he's not there, in course. He stays after sun-set if he's fore-spoken, not else. So now you know where we were that awful night. For we'd crossed the first channel about two mile, and it were growing darker and darker above and around us, all but one red line of light above the hills, when we came to a hollow (for all the Sands look so flat, there's many a hollow in them where you

lose all sight of the shore). We were longer than we should ha' been in crossing the hollow, the sand was so quick; and when we came up again, there, again the blackness, was the white line of the rushing tide coming up the bay! It looked not a mile from us; and when the wind blows up the bay, it comes swifter than a galloping horse. 'Lord help us!' said I; and then I were sorry I'd spoken, to frighten Letty, but the words were crushed out of my heart by the terror. I felt her shiver up by my side, and clutch my coat.. And as if the pig (as had screeched himself hoarse some time ago) had found out the danger we were all in, he took to squealing again, enough to bewilder any man. I cursed him between my teeth for his noise; and yet it was God's answer to my prayer, blind sinner as I was. Ay! you may smile, sir, but God can work through many a scornful thing, if need be.

"By this time the mare were all in a lather, and trembling and panting, as if in mortal fright; for though we were on the last bank afore the second channel, the water was gathering up her legs; and she so tired out! When we came close to the channel she stood still, and not all my flogging could get her to stir; she fairly groaned aloud, and shook in a terrible quaking way. Till now Letty had not spoken; only held my coat tightly. I heard her say something, and bent down my head.

"I think, John — I think — I shall never see baby again!"

"And then she sent up such a cry — so loud, and shrill, and pitiful! It fairly maddened me. I pulled out my knife to spur on the old mare, that it might end one way or the other, for the water was stealing sullenly up to the very axle-tree, let alone the white waves that knew no mercy in their steady advance. That one quarter of an hour, sir, seemed as long as all my life since. Thoughts, and fancies, and dreams, and memory, ran into each other. The mist, the heavy mist, that was like a ghastly curtain, shutting us in for death, seemed to bring with it the scents of the flowers that grew around our own threshold; — it might be, for it was falling on them like blessed dew, though to us it

was a shroud. Letty told me at after, she heard her baby crying for her, above the gurgling of the rising waters, as plain as ever she heard anything; but the sea-birds were skirling, and the pig shrieking; I never caught it; it was miles away, at any rate.

“Just as I’d gotten my knife out, another sound was close upon us, blending with the gurgle of the near waters, and the roar of the distant; (not so distant though;) we could hardly see, but we thought we saw something black against the deep lead colour of wave, and mist, and sky. It neared, and neared; with slow, steady motion, it came across the channel right to where we were. O God! it was Gilbert Dawson on his strong bay horse.

“Few words did we speak, and little time had we to say them in. I had no knowledge at that moment of past or future — only of one present thought — how to save Letty, and, if I could, myself. I only remembered afterwards that Gilbert said he had been guided by an animal’s shriek of terror; I only heard when all was over, that he had been uneasy about our return, because of the depth of fresh, and had borrowed a pillion, and saddled his horse early in the evening, and ridden down to Cart-lane to watch for us. If all had gone well, we should ne’er have heard of it. As it was, old Jonas told it, the tears down-dropping from his withered cheeks.

“We fastened his horse to the shandry. We lifted Letty to the pillion. The waters rose every instant with sullen sound. They were all but in the shandry. Letty clung to the pillion handles, but drooped her head as if she had yet no hope of life. Swifter than thought, (and yet he might have had time for thought and for temptation, sir: — if he had ridden off with Letty, he would have been saved not me,) Gilbert was in the shandry by my side.

“‘Quick!’ said he, clear and firm. ‘You must ride befcre her, and keep her up. The horse can swim. By God’s mercy I will follow. I can cut the traces, and if the mare is not hampered with the shandry, she’ll carry me safely through. At any rate, you are a husband and a father. No one cares for me.’

"Do not hate me, gentlemen. I often wish that night was a dream. It has haunted my sleep ever since like a dream, and yet it was no dream. I took his place on the saddle, and put Letty's arms around me, and felt her head rest on my shoulder. I trust in God I spoke some word of thanks; but I can't remember. I only recollect Letty raising her head, and calling out, —

"God bless you, Gilbert Dawson, for saving my baby from being an orphan this night.' And then she fell against me, as if unconscious.

"I bore her through; or, rather, the strong horse swam bravely through the gathering waves. We were dripping wet when we reached the banks in-shore; but we could have but one thought — where was Gilbert? Thick mists and heaving waters compassed us round. Where was he? We shouted. Letty, faint as she was, raised her voice and shouted, clear and shrill. No answer came, the sea boomed on with ceaseless sullen beat. I rode to the guide's house. He was a-bed, and would not get up, though I offered him more than I was worth. Perhaps he knew it, the cursed old villain! At any rate I'd have paid it if I'd toiled my life long. He said I might take his horn and welcome. I did, and blew such a blast through the still, black night, the echoes came back upon the heavy air: but no human voice or sound was heard; that wild blast could not awaken the dead.

"I took Letty home to her baby, over whom she wept the live-long night. I rode back to the shore about Cart-lane; and to and fro, with weary march, did I pace along the brink of the waters, now and then shouting out into the silence a vain cry for Gilbert. The waters went back and left no trace. Two days afterwards he was washed ashore near Flukeborough. The shandry and poor old mare were found half-buried in a heap of sand by Arnside Knot. As far as we could guess, he had dropped his knife while trying to cut the traces, and so had lost all chance of life. Any rate, the knife was found in a cleft of the shaft.

"His friends came over from Garstang to his funeral.

I wanted to go chief mourner, but it was not my right, and I might not; though I've never done mourning him to this day. When his sister packed up his things, I begged hard for something that had been his. She would give me none of his clothes, (she was a right-down having woman,) as she had boys of her own, who might grow up into them. But she threw me his Bible, as she said they'd gotten one already, and his were but a poor used-up thing. It was his, and so I cared for it. It were a black leather one, with pockets at the sides, old-fashioned-wise; and in one were a bunch of wild flowers, Letty said she could almost be sure were some she had once given him.

"There were many a text in the Gospel, marked broad with his carpenter's pencil, which more than bore him out in his refusal to fight. Of a surety, sir, there's call enough for bravery in the service of God, and to show love to man, without quarrelling and fighting.

"Thank you, gentlemen, for listening to me. Your words called up the thoughts of him, and my heart was full to speaking. But I must make up; I've to dig a grave for a little child, who is to be buried to-morrow morning, just when his playmates are trooping off to school."

"But tell us of Letty; is she yet alive?" asked Jeremy.

The old man shook his head, and struggled against a choking sigh. After a minute's pause he said,

"She died in less than two year at after that night. She was never like the same again. She would sit thinking, on Gilbert, I guessed; but I could not blame her. We had a boy, and we named it Gilbert Dawson Knipe; he that stoker on the London railway. Our girl was carried off in teething, and Letty just quietly drooped, and died in less than a six week. They were buried here; so I came to be near them, and away from Lindal, a place I could never abide after Letty was gone."

He turned to his work, and we, having rested sufficiently, rose up, and came away.

CHRISTMAS STORMS AND SUNSHINE.

IN the town of — (no matter where) there circulated two local newspapers (no matter when). Now the "Flying Post" was long established and respectable — alias bigoted and Tory; the "Examiner" was spirited and intelligent — alias new-fangled and Democratic. Every week these newspapers contained articles abusing each other; as cross and peppery as articles could be, and evidently the production of irritated minds, although they seemed to have one stereotyped commencement, — "Though the article appearing in last week's 'Post' (or 'Examiner') is below contempt, yet we have been induced,' &c. &c., and every Saturday the Radical shopkeepers shook hands together, and agreed that the "Post" was done for, by the slashing clever "Examiner;" while the more dignified Tories began by regretting that Johnson should think that low paper, only read by a few of the vulgar, worth wasting his wit upon; however the "Examiner" was at its last gasp.

It was not though. It lived and flourished; at least it paid its way, as one of the heroes of my story could tell. He was chief compositor, or whatever title may be given to the headman of the mechanical part of a newspaper. He hardly confined himself to that department. Once or twice, unknown to the editor, when the manuscript had fallen short, he had filled up the vacant space by compositions of his own; announcements of a forthcoming crop of green peas in December; a grey thrush having been seen, or a white hare, or such interesting phenomena; invented for the occasion I must confess; but what of that? His wife always knew when to expect a little specimen of her husband's literary talent by a peculiar cough, which served as prelude; and, judging from this encouraging sign,

and the high-pitched and emphatic voice in which he read them, she was inclined to think, that an "Ode to an early Rose-bud," in the corner devoted to original poetry, and a letter in the correspondence department, signed "Pro Bono Publico," were her husband's writing, and to hold up her head accordingly.

I never could find out what it was that occasioned the Hodgsons to lodge in the same house as the Jenkinses. Jenkins held the same office in the Tory paper, as Hodgson did in the "Examiner," and, as I said before, I leave you to give it a name. But Jenkins had a proper sense of his position, and a proper reverence for all in authority, from the king down to the editor, and sub-editor. He would as soon have thought of borrowing the king's crown for a nightcap, or the king's sceptre for a walking-stick, as he would have thought of filling up any spare corner with any production of his own; and I think it would have even added to his contempt of Hodgson (if that were possible), had he known of the "productions of his brain," as the latter fondly alluded to the paragraphs he inserted, when speaking to his wife.

Jenkins had his wife too. Wives were wanting to finish the completeness of the quarrel, which existed one memorable Christmas week, some dozen years ago, between the two neighbours, the two composers. And with wives, it was a very pretty, a very complete quarrel. To make the opposing parties still more equal, still more well-matched, if the Hodgsons had a baby, ("such a baby! — a poor puny little thing,") Mrs. Jenkins had a cat, ("such a cat! a great, nasty, miowling tom-cat, that was always stealing the milk put by for little Angel's supper.") And now, having matched Greek with Greek, I must proceed to the tug of war. It was the day before Christmas; such a cold east wind! such an inky sky! such a blue-black look in people's faces, as they were driven out more than usual, to complete their purchases for the next day's festival.

Before leaving home that morning, Jenkins had given some money to his wife to buy the next day's dinner.

"My dear, I wish for turkey and sausages. It may be a weakness, but I own I am partial to sausages. My deceased mother was. Such tastes are hereditary. As to the sweets — whether plum-pudding or mince-pies — I leave such considerations to you; I only beg you not to mind expense. Christmas comes but once a year."

And again he had called out from the bottom of the first flight of stairs, just close to the Hodgsons' door, ("Such ostentatiousness," as Mrs. Hodgson observed,) "You will not forget the sausages, my dear?"

"I should have liked to have had something above common, Mary," said Hodgson, as they too made their plans for the next day, "but I think roast beef must do for us. You see, love, we've a family."

"Only one, Jem! I don't want more than roast beef, though, I'm sure. Before I went to service, mother and me would have thought roast beef a very fine dinner."

"Well, let's settle it then, roast beef and a plum-pudding; and now, good bye. Mind and take care of little Tom. I thought he was a bit hoarse this morning."

And off he went to his work.

Now, it was a good while since Mrs. Jenkins and Mrs. Hodgson had spoken to each other, although they were quite as much in possession of the knowledge of events and opinions as though they did. Mary knew that Mrs. Jenkins despised her for not having a real lace cap, which Mrs. Jenkins had; and for having been a servant, which Mrs. Jenkins had not; and the little occasional pinchings which the Hodgsons were obliged to resort to, to make both ends meet, would have been very patiently endured by Mary, if she had not winced under Mrs. Jenkins's knowledge of such economy. But she had her revenge. She had a child, and Mrs. Jenkins had none. To have had a child, even such a puny baby as little Tom, Mrs. Jenkins would have worn commonest caps, and cleaned grates, and drudged her fingers to the bone. The great unspoken disappointment of her life soured her temper, and turned her thoughts inward, and made her morbid and selfish.

"Hang that cat! he's been stealing again! he's gnawed the cold mutton in his nasty mouth till it's not fit to set before a Christian; and I've nothing else for Jem's dinner. But I'll give it him now I've caught him, that I will!"

So saying, Mary Hodgson caught up her husband's Sunday cane, and despite pussy's cries and scratches, she gave him such a beating as she hoped might cure him of his thievish propensities; when lo! and behold, Mrs. Jenkins stood at the door with a face of bitter wrath.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself, ma'am, to abuse a poor dumb animal, ma'am, as knows no better than to take food when he sees it, ma'am? He only follows the nature which God has given, ma'am; and it's a pity your nature, ma'am, which I've heard, is of the stingy saving species, does not make you shut your cupboard-door a little closer. There is such a thing as law for brute animals. I'll ask Mr. Jenkins, but I don't think them Radicals has done away with that law yet, for all their Reform Bill, ma'am. My poor precious love of a Tommy, is he hurt? and is his leg broke for taking a mouthful of scraps, as most people would give away to a beggar, — if he'd take 'em?" wound up Mrs. Jenkins, casting a contemptuous look on the remnant of a scrag end of mutton.

Mary felt very angry and very guilty. For she really pitied the poor limping animal as he crept up to his mistress, and there lay down to bemoan himself; she wished she had not beaten him so hard, for it certainly was her own careless way of never shutting the cupboard-door that had tempted him to his fault. But the sneer at her little bit of mutton turned her penitence to fresh wrath, and she shut the door in Mrs. Jenkins's face, as she stood caressing her cat in the lobby, with such a bang, that it wakened little Tom, and he began to cry.

Everything was to go wrong with Mary to-day. Now baby was awake, who was to take her husband's dinner to the office? She took the child in her arms, and tried to hush him off to sleep again, and as she sung she cried, she could hardly tell why, — a sort of reaction from her violent angry feelings. She wished she had never beaten the poor cat; she wondered if his

leg was really broken. What would her mother say if she knew how cross and cruel her little Mary was getting? If she should live to beat her child in one of her angry fits?

It was of no use lullabying while she sobbed so; it must be given up, and she must just carry her baby in her arms, and take him with her to the office, for it was long past dinner-time. So she pared the mutton carefully, although by so doing she reduced the meat to an infinitesimal quantity, and taking the baked potatoes out of the oven, she popped them piping hot into her basket with the *et-cæteras* of plate, butter, salt, and knife and fork.

It was, indeed, a bitter wind. She bent against it as she ran, and the flakes of snow were sharp and cutting as ice. Baby cried all the way, though she cuddled him up in her shawl. Then her husband had made his appetite up for a potato pie, and (literary man as he was) his body got so much the better of his mind, that he looked rather black at the cold mutton. Mary had no appetite for her own dinner when she arrived at home again. So, after she had tried to feed baby, and he had fretfully refused to take his bread and milk, she laid him down as usual on his quilt, surrounded by playthings, while she sided away, and chopped suet for the next day's pudding. Early in the afternoon a parcel came, done up first in brown paper, then in such a white, grass-bleached, sweet-smelling towel, and a note from her dear, dear mother; in which quaint writing she endeavoured to tell her daughter that she was not forgotten at Christmas time; but that learning that Farmer Burton was killing his pig, she had made interest for some of his famous pork, out of which she had manufactured some sausages, and flavoured them just as Mary used to like when she lived at home.

“Dear, dear mother!” said Mary to herself. “There never was any one like her for remembering other folk. What rare sausages she used to make! Home things have a smack with ‘em no bought things can ever have. Set them up with their sausages! I’ve a notion if Mrs. Jenkins had ever tasted mother’s, she’d have no fancy for them town-made things Fanny took in just now.”

And so she went on thinking about home, till the smiles and the dimples came out again at the remembrance of that pretty cottage, which would look green even now in the depth of winter, with its pyracanthus, and its holly-bushes, and the great Portugal laurel that was her mother's pride. And the back path through the orchard to Farmer Burton's; how well she remembered it. The bushels of unripe apples she had picked up there and distributed among his pigs, till he had scolded her for giving them so much green trash.

She was interrupted — her baby (I call him a baby, because his father and mother did, and because he was so little of his age, but I rather think he was eighteen months old,) had fallen asleep some time before among his playthings; an uneasy, restless sleep; but of which Mary had been thankful, as his morning's nap had been too short, and as she was so busy. But now he began to make such a strange crowing noise, just like a chair drawn heavily and gratingly along a kitchen-floor! His eyes were open, but expressive of nothing but pain.

“Mother's darling!” said Mary, in terror, lifting him up. “Baby, try not to make that noise. Hush — hush — darling; what hurts him?” But the noise came worse and worse.

“Fanny! Fanny!” Mary called in mortal fright, for her baby was almost black with his gasping breath, and she had no one to ask for aid or sympathy but her landlady's daughter, a little girl of twelve or thirteen, who attended to the house in her mother's absence, as daily cook in gentlemen's families. Fanny was more especially considered the attendant of the upstairs lodgers (who paid for the use of the kitchen, “for Jenkins could not abide the smell of meat cooking,”) but just now she was fortunately sitting at her afternoon's work of darning stockings, and hearing Mrs. Hodgson's cry of terror, she ran to her sitting-room, and understood the case at a glance.

“He 's got the croup! Oh, Mrs. Hodgson, he 'll die as sure as fate. Little brother had it, and he died in no time. The doctor said he could do nothing for him, it had gone too far; he said if we 'd put him in a warm bath at first, it might have saved him; but, bless you! he was never half so bad as your

baby." Unconsciously there mingled in her statement some of a child's love of producing an effect; but the increasing danger was clear enough.

"Oh, my baby! my baby. Oh, love! love! don't look so ill; I cannot bear it. And my fire so low! There, I was thinking of home, and picking currants, and never minding the fire. Oh, Fanny! what is the fire like in the kitchen? speak."

"Mother told me to screw it up, and throw some slack on as soon as Mrs. Jenkins had done with it, and so I did; it's very low and black. But oh, Mrs. Hodgson! let me run for the doctor—I cannot abear to hear him, it's so like little brother."

Through her streaming tears Mary motioned her to go; and trembling, sinking, sick at heart, she laid her boy in his cradle, and ran to fill her kettle.

Mrs. Jenkins having cooked her husband's snug little dinner, to which he came home; having told him her story of pussy's beating, at which he was justly and dignifiedly (?) indignant saying it was all of a piece with that abusive "Examiner;" having received the sausages, and turkey, and mince-pies, which her husband had ordered; and cleaned up the room, and prepared everything for tea, and coaxed and duly bemoaned her cat (who had pretty nearly forgotten his beating, but very much enjoyed the petting),—having done all these and many other things, Mrs. Jenkins sate down to get up the real lace cap. Every thread was pulled out separately, and carefully stretched: when, what was that? Outside, in the street, a chorus of piping children's voices sang the old carol she had heard a hundred times in the days of her youth.

"As Joseph was a walking he heard an angel sing,
'This night shall be born our heavenly King.
He neither shall be born in housen nor in hall,
Nor in the place of Paradise, but in an ox's stall.
He neither shall be clothed in purple nor in pall,
But all in fair linen, as were babies all:
He neither shall be rocked in silver nor in gold,
But in a wooden cradle that rocks on the mould,' " etc.

She got up and went to the window. There, below, stood the group of grey black little figures, relieved against the snow, which now enveloped everything. "For old sake's sake," as

she phrased it, she counted out a halfpenny a piece for the singers, out of the copper bag, and threw them down below.

The room had become chilly while she had been counting out and throwing down her money, so she stirred her already glowing fire, and sat down right before it — but not to stretch her lace; like Mary Hodgson, she began to think over long-past days — on softening remembrances of the dead and gone — on words long forgotten — on holy stories heard at her mother's knee.

"I cannot think what's come over me to-night," said she, half-aloud, recovering herself by the sound of her own voice from her train of thought; "my head goes wandering on them old times. I'm sure more texts have come into my head with thinking on my mother within this last half hour, than I've thought on for years and years. I hope I'm not going to die. Folks say, thinking too much on the dead betokens we're going to join 'em; I should be loth to go just yet — such a fine turkey as we've got for dinner to-morrow, too!"

Knock, knock, knock, at the door, as fast as knuckles could go. And then, as if the comer could not wait, the door was opened, and Mary Hodgson stood there as white as death.

"Mrs. Jenkins! — oh, your kettle is boiling, thank God! Let me have the water for my baby, for the love of God! — he's got croup, and is dying!"

Mrs. Jenkins turned on her chair with a wooden inflexible look on her face, that (between ourselves) her husband knew and dreaded for all his pompous dignity.

"I'm sorry I can't oblige you, ma'am; my kettle is wanted for my husband's tea. Don't be afeared, Tommy, Mrs. Hodgson won't venture to intrude herself where she's not desired. You'd better send for the doctor, ma'am, instead of wasting your time in wringing your hands, ma'am — my kettle is engaged."

Mary clasped her hands together with passionate force, but spoke no word of entreaty to that wooden face — that sharp, determined voice; but, as she turned away, she prayed for strength to bear the coming trial, and strength to forgive Mrs. Jenkins.

Mrs. Jenkins watched her go away meekly, as one who has no hope, and then she turned upon herself as sharply as she ever did on any one else.

“What a brute I am, Lord forgive me! What’s my husband’s tea to a baby’s life? In croup, too, where time is everything. You crabbed old vixen, you — any one may know you never had a child!”

She was down stairs (kettle in hand) before she had finished her self-upbraiding; and when in Mrs. Hodgson’s room, she rejected all thanks (Mary had not the voice for many words), saying stiffly, “I do it for the poor babby’s sake, ma’am, hoping he may live to have mercy to poor dumb beasts, if he does forget to lock his cupboards.”

But she did everything, and more than Mary, with her young inexperience, could have thought of. She prepared the warm bath, and tried it with her husband’s own thermometer (Mr. Jenkins was as punctual as clock-work in noting down the temperature of every day). She let his mother place her baby in the tub, still preserving the same rigid affronted aspect, and then she went up stairs without a word. Mary longed to ask her to stay, but dared not; though, when she left the room, the tears chased each other down her cheeks faster than ever. Poor young mother! how she counted the minutes till the doctor should come. But, before he came, down again stalked Mrs. Jenkins, with something in her hand.

“I’ve seen many of these croup-fits, which, I take it, you’ve not, ma’am. Mustard plaisters is very sovereign put on the throat; I’ve been up and made one, ma’am, and, by your leave, I’ll put it on the poor little fellow.”

Mary could not speak, but she signed her grateful assent.

It began to smart while they still kept silence; and he looked up to his mother as if seeking courage from her looks to bear the stinging pain, but she was softly crying, to see him suffer, and her want of courage reacted upon him, and he began to sob aloud. Instantly Mrs. Jenkins’s apron was up, hiding her face; “Peep bo, baby,” said she, as merrily as she could. His little face brightened, and his mother having once got the cue,

the two women kept the little fellow amused, until his plaster had taken effect.

"He's better, — oh, Mrs. Jenkins, look at his eyes! how different! And he breathes quite softly —"

As Mary spoke thus, the Doctor entered. He examined his patient. Baby was really better.

"It has been a sharp attack, but the remedies you have applied have been worth all the *Pharmacopœia* an hour later. — I shall send a powder," &c., &c.

Mrs. Jenkins stayed to hear this opinion; and (her heart wonderfully more easy) was going to leave the room, when Mary seized her hand and kissed it; she could not speak her gratitude.

Mrs. Jenkins looked affronted and awkward, and as if she must go up stairs and wash her hand directly.

But, in spite of these sour looks, she came softly down an hour or so afterwards to see how baby was.

The little gentleman slept well after the fright he had given his friends; and on Christmas morning, when Mary awoke and looked at the sweet little pale face lying on her arm, she could hardly realise the danger he had been in.

When she came down (later than usual), she found the household in a commotion. What do you think had happened? Why, pussy had been a traitor to his best friend, and eaten up some of Mr. Jenkins's own especial sausages; and gnawed and tumbled the rest so, that they were not fit to be eaten! There were no bounds to that cat's appetite! he would have eaten his own father if he had been tender enough. And now Mrs. Jenkins stormed and cried — "Hang the cat."

Christmas-day, too! and all the shops shut! "What was turkey without sausages?" gruffly asked Mr. Jenkins.

"Oh, Jem!" whispered Mary, "Hearken, what a piece of work he's making about sausages, — I should like to take Mrs. Jenkins up some of mother's; they're twice as good as bought sausages."

"I see no objection, my dear. Sausages do not involve intimacies, else his politics are what I can no ways respect."

"But, O Jem, if you had seen her last night about baby! I'm sure she may scold me for ever, and I'll not answer. I'd even make her cat welcome to the sausages." The tears gathered to Mary's eyes as she kissed her boy.

"Better take 'em up stairs, my dear, and give them to the cat's mistress." And Jem chuckled at his saying.

Mary put them on a plate, but still she loitered.

"What must I say, Jem? I never know."

"Say — I hope you'll accept of these sausages, as my mother — no, that's not grammar; — say what comes uppermost, Mary, it will be sure to be right."

So Mary carried them up stairs and knocked at the door; and when told to "come in," she looked very red, but went up to Mrs. Jenkins, saying, "Please, take these. Mother made them." And was away before an answer could be given.

Just as Hodgson was ready to go to church, Mrs. Jenkins came down stairs, and called Fanny. In a minute the latter entered the Hodgsons' room, and delivered Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins's compliments, and they would be particular glad if Mr. and Mrs. Hodgson would eat their dinner with them.

"And carry baby up stairs in a shawl, be sure," added Mrs. Jenkins's voice in the passage, close to the door, whither she had followed her messenger. There was no discussing the matter, with the certainty of every word being overheard.

Mary looked anxiously at her husband. She remembered his saying he did not approve of Mr. Jenkins's politics.

"Do you think it would do for baby?" asked he.

"Oh yes," answered she, eagerly; "I would wrap him up so warm."

"And I've got our room up to sixty-five already, for all it's so frosty," added the voice outside.

Now, how do you think they settled the matter? The very best way in the world. Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins came down into the Hodgsons' room, and dined there. Turkey at the top, roast beef at the bottom, sausages at one side, potatoes at the other. Second course, plum-pudding at the top, and mince pies at the bottom.

And after dinner, Mrs. Jenkins would have baby on her knee; and he seemed quite to take to her; she declared he was admiring the real lace on her cap, but Mary thought (though she did not say so) that he was pleased by her kind looks, and coaxing words. Then he was wrapped up and carried carefully upstairs to tea, in Mrs. Jenkins's room. And after tea, Mrs. Jenkins, and Mary, and her husband, found out each other's mutual liking for music, and sat singing old glees and catches, till I don't know what o'clock, without one word of politics or newspapers.

Before they parted, Mary had coaxed pussy on to her knee; for Mrs. Jenkins would not part with baby, who was sleeping on her lap.

"When you're busy, bring him to me. Do, now, it will be a real favour. I know you must have a deal to do, with another coming; let him come up to me. I'll take the greatest of cares of him; pretty darling, how sweet he looks when he's asleep!"

When the couples were once more alone, the husbands unburdened their minds to their wives.

Mr. Jenkins said to his: — "Do you know, Burgess tried to make me believe Hodgson was such a fool as to put paragraphs into the 'Examiner' now and then; but I see he knows his place, and has got too much sense to do any such thing."

Hodgson said, — "Mary, love, I almost fancy from Jenkins's way of speaking (so much civiller than I expected), he guesses I wrote that 'Pro Bono' and the 'Rose-bud,' — an any rate, I've no objection to your naming it, if the subject should come uppermost; I should like him to know I'm a literary man."

Well! I've ended my tale; I hope you don't think it too long; but, before I go, just let me say one thing.

If any of you have any quarrels, or misunderstandings, or coolnesses, or cold shoulders, or shynesses, or tiffs, or miffs, or huffs, with any one else, just make friends before Christmas, — you will be so much merrier if you do.

I ask it of you for the sake of that old angelic song, heard so many years ago by the shepherds, keeping watch by night, on Bethlehem Heights.

HAND AND HEART.

"MOTHER, I should so like to have a great deal of money," said little Tom Fletcher one evening, as he sat on a low stool by his mother's knee. His mother was knitting busily by the fire-light, and they had both been silent for some time.

"What would you do with a great deal of money if you had it?"

"Oh! I don't know — I would do a great many things. But should not you like to have a great deal of money, mother?" persisted he.

"Perhaps I should," answered Mrs. Fletcher. "I am like you sometimes, dear, and think that I should be very glad of a little more money. But then I don't think I am like you in one thing, for I have always some little plan in my mind, for which I should want the money. I never wish for it just for its own sake."

"Why, mother! there are so many things we could do if we had but money; — real good, wise things I mean."

"And if we have real good, wise things in our head to do, which cannot be done without money, I can quite enter into the wish for money. But you know, my little boy, you did not tell me of any good or wise thing."

"No! I believe I was not thinking of good or wise things just then, but only how much I should like money to do what I liked," answered little Tom ingenuously, looking up in his mother's face. She smiled down upon him, and stroked his head. He knew she was pleased with him for having told her openly what was passing in his mind. Presently he began again.

"Mother, if you wanted to do something very good and

wise, and if you could not do it without money, what should you do?"

"There are two ways of obtaining money for such wants; one is by earning; and the other is by saving. Now both are good, because both imply self-denial. Do you understand me, Tom! If you have to earn money, you must steadily go on doing what you do not like perhaps; such as working when you would like to be playing, or in bed, or sitting talking with me over the fire. You deny yourself these little pleasures; and that is a good habit in itself, to say nothing of the industry and energy you have to exert in working. If you save money, you can easily see how you exercise self-denial. You do without something you wish for in order to possess the money it would have cost. Inasmuch as self-denial, energy, and industry are all good things, you do well either to earn or to save. But you see the purpose for which you want the money must be taken into consideration. You say, for 'something wise and good.' Either earning or saving become holy in this case. I must then think which will be most consistent with my other duties, before I decide whether I will earn or save money."

"I don't quite know what you mean, mother."

"I will try and explain myself. You know I have to keep a little shop, and to try and get employment in knitting stockings, and to clean my house, and to mend our clothes, and many other things. Now, do you think I should be doing my duty if I left you in the evenings, when you come home from school, to go out as a waiter at ladies' parties? I could earn a good deal of money by it, and I could spend it well among those who are poorer than I am (such as lame Harry), but then I should be leaving you alone in the little time that we have to be together; I do not think I should be doing right even for our 'good and wise purpose' to earn money, if it took me away from you at nights: do you, Tom?"

"No indeed; you never mean to do it, do you, mother?"

"No," said she, smiling; "at any rate not till you are older. You see at present then, I cannot *earn* money, if I want a little

more than usual to help a sick neighbour. I must then try and *save* money. Nearly every one can do that."

"Can *we*, mother? We are so careful of everything. Ned Dixon calls us stingy: what could *we* save!"

"Oh, many and many a little thing. We use many things which are luxuries; which we do not want, but only use them for pleasure. Tea and sugar, — butter, — our Sunday's dinner of bacon or meat, — the grey ribbon I bought for my bonnet, because you thought it prettier than the black, which was cheaper; all these are luxuries. We use very little tea or sugar, it is true; but we might do without any."

"You did do without any, mother, for a long, long time, you know, to help widow Black; it was only for your bad headaches."

"Well! but you see we can save money; a penny, a half-penny a day, or even a penny a week, would in time make a little store ready to be applied to the 'good and wise' purpose, when the time comes. But do you know, my little boy, I think we may be considering money too much as the only thing required if we want to do a kindness."

"If it is not the only thing, it is the chief thing at any rate."

"No, love, it is not the chief thing. I should think very poorly of that beggar, who liked sixpence given with a curse (as I have sometimes heard it), better than the kind and gentle words some people use in refusing to give. The curse sinks deep into the heart; or if it does not, it is a proof that the poor creature has been made hard before by harsh treatment. And mere money can do little to cheer a sore heart. It is kindness only that can do this. Now we have all of us kindness in our power. The little child of two years old, who can only just totter about, can show kindness."

"Can I, mother?"

"To be sure, dear; and you often do, only perhaps not quite so often as you might do. Neither do I. But instead of wishing for money (of which I don't think either you or I are ever likely to have much), suppose you try to-morrow how you can make people happier, by thinking of little loving actions of help. Let

us try and take for our text, ‘Silver and gold I have none, but such as I have give I unto thee.’”

“Ay, mother, we will.”

Must I tell you about little Tom’s “to-morrow?”

I do not know if little Tom dreamed of what his mother and he had been talking about, but I do know that the first thing he thought about, when he awoke in the morning, was his mother’s saying that he might try how many kind actions he could do that day without money; and he was so impatient to begin, that he jumped up and dressed himself, although it was more than an hour before his usual time of getting up. All the time he kept wondering what a little boy like him, only eight years old, could do for other people; till at last he grew so puzzled with inventing occasions for showing kindness, that he very wisely determined to think no more about it, but learn his lessons very perfectly; that was the first thing he had to do; and then he would try, without too much planning beforehand, to keep himself ready to lend a helping hand, or to give a kind word, when the right time came. So he screwed himself into a corner, out of the way of his mother’s sweeping and dusting, and tucked his feet up on the rail of the chair, turned his face to the wall, and in about half an hour’s time, he could turn round with a light heart, feeling he had learnt his lesson well, and might employ his time as he liked till breakfast was ready. He looked round the room; his mother had arranged all neatly, and was now gone to the bed-room; but the coal scuttle and the can for water were empty, and Tom ran away to fill them; and as he came back with the latter from the pump, he saw Ann Jones (the scold of the neighbourhood) hanging out her clothes on a line stretched across from side to side of the little court, and speaking very angrily and loudly to her little girl, who was getting into some mischief in the house-place, as her mother perceived through the open door.

“There never were such plagues as my children are, to be sure,” said Ann Jones, as she went into her house, looking very red and passionate. Directly after, Tom heard the sound of a slap, and then a little child’s cry of pain.

"I wonder," thought he, "if I durst go and offer to nurse and play with little Hester. Ann Jones is fearful cross, and just as likely to take me wrong as right; but she won't box me for mother's sake; mother nursed Jemmy many a day through the fever, so she won't slap me, I think. Any rate I'll try." But it was with a beating heart he said to the fierce-looking Mrs. Jones, "Please, may I go and play with Hester. May be I could keep her quiet while you're busy hanging out clothes."

"What! and let you go slopping about, I suppose, just when I'd made all ready for my master's breakfast. Thank you, but my own children's mischief is as much as I reckon on; I'll have none of strange lads in my house."

"I did not mean to do mischief or slop," said Tom a little sadly at being misunderstood in his good intentions. "I only wanted to help."

"If you want to help, lift me up those clothes' pegs, and save me stooping; my back's broken with it."

Tom would much rather have gone to play with and amuse little Hester; but it was true enough that giving Mrs. Jones the clothes' pegs as she wanted them would help her as much; and perhaps keep her from being so cross with her children if they did anything to hinder her. Besides, little Hester's cry had died away, and she was evidently occupied in some new pursuit (Tom could only hope that it was not in mischief this time); so he began to give Ann the pegs as she wanted them, and she, soothed by his kind help, opened her heart a little to him.

"I wonder how it is your mother has trained you up to be so handy, Tom; you're as good as a girl; better than many a girl; I don't think Hester in three years' time will be as thoughtful as you. There!" (as a fresh scream reached them from the little ones inside the house), "they are at some mischief again; but I'll teach 'em," said she, getting down from her stool in a fresh access of passion.

"Let me go," said Tom in a begging voice, for he dreaded the cruel sound of another slap. "I'll lift the basket of pegs on to a stool, so that you need not stoop; and I'll keep the little ones safe out of mischief till you're done. Do let me go, missus."

With some grumblings at losing his help, she let him go into the house-place. He found Hester, a little girl of five, and two younger ones. They had been fighting for a knife, and in the struggle, the second, Johnnie, had cut his finger, — not very badly, but he was frightened at the sight of the blood; and Hester, who might have helped, and who was really sorry, stood sullenly aloof, dreading the scolding her mother always gave her if either of the little ones hurt themselves while under her care.

“Hester,” said Tom, “will you get me some cold water, please? it will stop the bleeding better than anything; I dare say you can find me a basin to hold it.”

Hester trotted off, pleased at Tom’s confidence in her power. When the bleeding was partly stopped, he asked her to find him a bit of rag, and she scrambled under the dresser for a little piece she had hidden there the day before. Meanwhile Johnnie ceased crying, he was so interested in all the preparation for dressing his little wound, and so much pleased to find himself an object of so much attention and consequence. The baby too sat on the floor, gravely wondering at the commotion; and thus busily occupied, they were quiet and out of mischief till Ann Jones came in, and, having hung out her clothes, and finished that morning’s piece of work, she was ready to attend to her children in her rough, hasty kind of way.

“Well! I’m sure, Tom, you’ve tied it up as neatly as I could have done; I wish I’d always such a one as you to see after the children; but you must run off now, lad, your mother was calling you as I came in, and I said I’d send you: good-bye, and thank you.”

As Tom was going away, the baby, sitting in square gravity on the floor, but somehow conscious of Tom’s gentle helpful ways, put up her mouth to be kissed; and he stooped down in answer to the little gesture, feeling very happy, and very full of love and kindness.

After breakfast his mother told him it was school time, and he must set off, as she did not like him to run in out of breath and flurried, just when the schoolmaster was going to begin;

but she wished him to come in decently and in order, with quiet decorum, and thoughtfulness as to what he was going to do. So Tom got his cap and his bag, and went off with a light heart, which I suppose made his footsteps light, for he found himself above half way to school, while it wanted yet a quarter to the time. So he slackened his pace, and looked about him a little more than he had been doing. There was a little girl on the other side of the street carrying a great big basket, and lugging along a little child just able to walk; but who, I suppose, was tired, for he was crying pitifully, and sitting down every two or three steps. Tom ran across the street, for, as perhaps you have found out, he was very fond of babies, and could not bear to hear them cry.

"Little girl, what is he crying about? Does he want to be carried? I'll take him up, and carry him as far as I go alongside of you."

So saying, Tom was going to suit the action to the word; but the baby did not choose that any one should carry him but his sister, and refused Tom's kindness. Still he could carry the heavy basket of potatoes for the little girl, which he did as far as their road lay together; when she thanked him, and bade him good-bye, and said she could manage very well now, her home was so near. So Tom went into school very happy and peaceful; and had a good character to take home to his mother for that morning's lesson.

It happened that this very day was the weekly half holiday, so that Tom had many hours unoccupied that afternoon. Of course his first employment after dinner was to learn his lessons for the next day; and then, when he had put his books away, he began to wonder what he should do next.

He stood lounging against the door wishing all manner of idle wishes; a habit he was apt to fall into. He wished he were the little boy who lived opposite, who had three brothers ready to play with him on half holidays; he wished he were Sam Harrison, whose father had taken him one day a trip by the railroad; he wished he were the little boy who always went with the omnibuses,— it must be so pleasant to go riding about on

the step, and to see so many people; he wished he were a sailor to sail away to the countries where grapes grew wild, and monkies and parrots were to be had for the catching. Just as he was wishing himself the little Prince of Wales to drive about in a goat carriage, and wondering if he should not feel very shy with the three great ostrich feathers always niddle-nodding on his head, for people to know him by, his mother came from washing up the dishes, and saw him deep in the reveries little boys and girls are apt to fall into when they are the only children in a house.

"My dear Tom," said she, "why don't you go out, and make the most of this fine afternoon?"

"Oh, mother," answered he (suddenly recalled to the fact that he was little Tom Fletcher, instead of the Prince of Wales, and consequently feeling a little bit flat), "it is so dull going out by myself. I have no one to play with. Can't you go with me, mother — just this once into the fields?"

Poor Mrs. Fletcher heartily wished she could gratify this very natural desire of her little boy; but she had the shop to mind, and many a little thing besides to do; it was impossible. But however much she might regret a thing, she was too faithful to repine. So after a moment's thought she said cheerfully, "Go into the fields for a walk, and see how many wild flowers you can bring me home, and I'll get down father's jug for you to put them in when you come back."

"But, mother, there are so few pretty flowers near a town," said Tom, a little unwillingly, for it was a coming down from being Prince of Wales, and he was not yet quite reconciled to it.

"Oh dear! there are a great many if you'll only look for them. I dare say you'll make me up as many as twenty different kinds."

"Will you reckon daisies, mother?"

"To be sure; they are just as pretty as any."

"Oh, if you'll reckon such as them, I dare say I can bring you more than twenty."

So off he ran. his mother watching him till he was out

of sight, and then she returned to her work. In about two hours he came back; his pale cheeks looking quite rosy, and his eyes quite bright. His country walk, taken with cheerful spirits, had done him all the good his mother desired, and had restored his usually even, happy temper.

“Look, mother! here are three and twenty different kinds; you said I might count all, so I have even counted this thing like a nettle with lilac flowers, and this little common blue thing.”

“Robin-run-in-the-hedge is its name,” said his mother. “It’s very pretty if you look at it close. One, two, three”—she counted them all over, and there really were three and twenty. She went to reach down the best jug.

“Mother,” said little Tom, “do you like them very much?”

“Yes, very much,” said she, not understanding his meaning. He was silent, and gave a little sigh. “Why, my dear?”

“Oh, only—it does not signify if you like them very much; but I thought how nice it would be to take them to lame Harry, who can never walk so far as the fields, and can hardly know what summer is like, I think.”

“Oh, that will be very nice; I am glad you thought of it.”

Lame Harry was sitting by himself, very patiently, in a neighbouring cellar. He was supported by his daughter’s earnings; but as she worked in a factory he was much alone.

If the bunch of flowers had looked pretty in the fields, they looked ten times as pretty in the cellar to which they were now carried. Lame Harry’s eyes brightened up with pleasure at the sight; and he began to talk of the times long ago, when he was a little boy in the country, and had a corner of his father’s garden to call his own, and grow lad’s-love and wall-flower in. Little Tom put them in water for him, and put the jug on the table by him; on which his daughter had placed the old Bible, worn with much reading, although treated with careful reverence. It was lying open, with Harry’s horn spectacles put in to mark the place.

“I reckon my spectacles are getting worn out; they are not so clear as they used to be; they are dim-like before my eyes,

and it hurts me to read long together," said Harry. "It's a sad miss to me. I never thought the time long when I could read; but now I keep wearying for the day to be over, though the nights, when I cannot sleep for my legs paining me, are almost as bad. However, it's the Lord's will."

"Would you like me — I cannot read very well aloud, but I'd do my best, if you'd like me to read a bit to you. I'll just run home and get my tea, and be back directly." And off Tom ran.

He found it very pleasant reading aloud to lame Harry, for the old man had so much to say that was worth listening to, and was so glad of a listener, that I think there was as much talking as reading done that evening. But the Bible served as a text-book to their conversation; for in a long life old Harry had seen and heard so much, which he had connected with events or promises or precepts contained in the Scriptures, that it was quite curious to find how everything was brought in and dove-tailed as an illustration of what they were reading.

When Tom got up to go away, lame Harry gave him many thanks, and told him he would not sleep the worse for having made an old man's evening so pleasant. Tom came home in high self-satisfaction. "Mother," said he, "it's all very true what you said about the good that may be done without money: I've done many pieces of good to-day without a farthing. First," said he, taking hold of his little finger, "I helped Ann Jones with hanging out her clothes when she was" —

His mother had been listening while she turned over the pages of the New Testament which lay by her, and now having found what she wanted, she put her arm gently round his waist, and drew him fondly towards her. He saw her finger put under one passage and read, —

"Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth."

He was silent in a moment.

Then his mother spoke in her soft low voice: — "Dearest Tom, though I don't want us to talk about it, as if you had been doing more than just what you ought, I am glad you have seen the truth of what I said; how far more may be done by the

loving heart, than by mere money-giving; and every one may have the loving heart."

I have told you of one day of little Tom's life, when he was eight years old, and lived with his mother. I must now pass over a year, and tell you of a very different kind of life he had then to lead. His mother had never been very strong, and had had a good deal of anxiety: at last she was taken ill, and soon felt that there was no hope for her recovery. For a long time the thought of leaving her little boy was a great distress to her, and a great trial to her faith. But God strengthened her, and sent his peace into her soul, and before her death she was content to leave her precious child in his hands, who is a Father to the fatherless, and defendeth the cause of the widow.

When she felt that she had not many more days to live, she sent for her husband's brother, who lived in a town not many miles off; and gave her little Tom in charge to him to bring up.

"There are a few pounds in the savings bank — I don't know how many exactly — and the furniture and bit of stock in the shop; perhaps they would be enough to bring him up to be a joiner, like his father before him."

She spoke feebly, and with many pauses. Her brother-in-law, though a rough kind of man, wished to do all he could to make her feel easy in her last moments, and touched with the reference to his dead brother, promised all she required.

"I'll take him back with me after" — the funeral, he was going to say, but he stopped. She smiled gently, fully understanding his meaning.

"We shall, may be, not be so tender with him as you've been; but I'll see he comes to no harm. It will be a good thing for him to rough it a bit with other children, — he's too nesh for a boy; but I'll pay them if they arn't kind to him in the long run, never fear."

Though this speech was not exactly what she liked, there was quite enough of good feeling in it to make her thankful for such a protector and friend for her boy. And so, thankful for the joys she had had, and thankful for the sorrows which had

taught her meekness, thankful for life, and thankful for death, she died.

Her brother-in-law arranged all as she had wished. After the quiet simple funeral was over, he took Tom by the hand, and set off on the six-mile walk to his home. Tom had cried till he could cry no more, but sobs came quivering up from his heart every now and then, as he passed some well-remembered cottage, or thorn-bush, or tree on the road. His uncle was very sorry for him, but did not know what to say, or how to comfort him.

“Now mind, lad, thou com’st to me if thy cousins are o’er hard upon thee. Let me hear if they misuse thee, and I’ll give it them.”

Tom shrunk from the idea that this gave him of the cousins, whose companionship he had, until then, been looking forward to as a pleasure. He was not reassured when, after threading several streets and by-ways, they came into a court of dingy-looking houses, and his uncle opened the door of one, from which the noise of loud, if not angry voices was heard.

A tall large woman was whirling one child out of her way with a rough movement of her arm; while she was scolding a boy a little older than Tom, who stood listening sullenly to her angry words.

“I’ll tell father of thee, I will,” said she; and turning to uncle John, she began to pour out her complaints against Jack, without taking any notice of little Tom, who clung to his uncle’s hand as to a protector in the scene of violence into which he had entered.

“Well, well, wife! — I’ll leather Jack the next time I catch him letting the water out of the pipe; but now get this lad and me some tea, for we’re weary and tired.”

His aunt seemed to wish Jack might be leathered now, and to be angry with her husband for not revenging her injuries; for an injury it was that the boy had done her in letting the water all run off, and that on the very eve of the washing day. The mother grumbled as she left off mopping the wet floor, and went to the fire to stir it up ready for the kettle, without a word

of greeting to her little nephew, or of welcome to her husband. On the contrary, she complained of the trouble of getting tea ready afresh, just when she had put slack on the fire, and had no water in the house to fill the kettle with. Her husband grew angry, and Tom was frightened to hear his uncle speaking sharply.

“If I can’t have a cup of tea in my own house without all this ado, I’ll go to the Spread Eagle, and take Tom with me. They’ve a bright fire there at all times, choose how they manage it; and no scolding wives. Come, Tom, let’s be off.”

Jack had been trying to scrape acquaintance with his cousin by winks and grimaces behind his mother’s back, and now made a sign of drinking out of an imaginary glass. But Tom clung to his uncle, and softly pulled him down again on his chair, from which he had risen to go to the public-house.

“If you please, ma’am,” said he, sadly frightened of his aunt, “I think I could find the pump, if you’d let me try.”

She muttered something like an acquiescence; so Tom took up the kettle, and, tired as he was, went out to the pump. Jack, who had done nothing but mischief all day, stood amazed, but at last settled that his cousin was a “softy.”

When Tom came back, he tried to blow the fire with the broken bellows, and at last the water boiled, and the tea was made. “Thou’rt a rare lad, Tom,” said his uncle. “I wonder when our Jack will be of as much use.”

This comparison did not please either Jack or his mother, who liked to keep to herself the privilege of directing their father’s dissatisfaction with his children. Tom felt their want of kindness towards him, and now that he had nothing to do but rest and eat, he began to feel very sad, and his eyes kept filling with tears, which he brushed away with the back of his hand, not wishing to have them seen. But his uncle noticed him.

“Thou had’st better have had a glass at the Spread Eagle,” said he, compassionately.

“No; I only am rather tired. May I go to bed?” said he, longing for a good cry unobserved under the bed-clothes.

"Where's he to sleep?" asked the husband of the wife.

"Nay," said she, still offended on Jack's account, "that's thy look out. He's thy flesh and blood, not mine."

"Come, wife," said uncle John, "he's an orphan, poor chap. An orphan is kin to every one."

She was softened directly, for she had much kindness in her, although this evening she had been so much put out.

"There's no place for him but with Jack and Dick. We've the baby, and the other three are packed close enough."

She took Tom up to the little back room, and stopped to talk with him for a minute or two, for her husband's words had smitten her heart, and she was sorry for the ungracious reception she had given Tom at first.

"Jack and Dick are never in bed till we come, and it's work enough to catch them then on fine evenings," said she, as she took the candle away.

Tom tried to speak to God as his mother had taught him, out of the fulness of his little heart, which was heavy enough that night. He tried to think how she would have wished him to speak and to do, and when he felt puzzled with the remembrance of the scene of disorder and anger which he had seen, he earnestly prayed God would make and keep clear his path before him. And then he fell asleep.

He had had a long dream of other and happier days, and had thought he was once more taking a Sunday evening walk with his mother, when he was roughly wakened up by his cousins.

"I say, lad, you're lying right across the bed. You must get up, and let Dick and me come in, and then creep into the space that's left."

Tom got up dizzy and half awake. His cousins got into bed, and then squabbled about the largest share. It ended in a kicking match, during which Tom stood shivering by the bedside.

"I'm sure we're pinched enough as it is," said Dick at last. "And why they've put Tom in with us I can't think. But I'll not stand it. Tom shan't sleep with us. He may lie on the floor, if he likes. I'll not hinder him."

He expected an opposition from Tom, and was rather sur-

prised when he heard the little fellow quietly lie down, and cover himself as well as he could with his clothes. After some more quarrelling Jack and Dick fell asleep. But in the middle of the night Dick awoke, and heard by Tom's breathing that he was still awake, and was crying gently.

"What! molly-coddle, crying for a softer bed?" asked Dick.

"Oh no — I don't care for that — if — oh! if mother were but alive." Little Tom sobbed aloud.

"I say," said Dick, after a pause. "There's room at my back if you'll creep in. There! don't be afraid — why, how cold you are, lad."

Dick was sorry for his cousin's loss, but could not speak about it. However, his kind tone sank into Tom's heart, and he fell asleep once more.

The three boys all got up at the same time in the morning, but were not inclined to talk. Jack and Dick put on their clothes as fast as possible, and ran downstairs; but this was quite a different way of going on to what Tom had been accustomed. He looked about for some kind of basin or mug to wash in; there was none, — not even a jug of water in the room. He slipped on a few necessary clothes, and went downstairs, found a pitcher, and went off to the pump. His cousins, who were playing in the court, laughed at him, and would not tell him where the soap was kept; he had to look some minutes before he could find it. Then he went back to the bedroom; but on entering it from the fresh air, the smell was so oppressive that he could not endure it. Three people had been breathing the air all night, and had used up every particle many times over and over again; and each time that it had been sent out from the lungs, it was less fit than before to be breathed again. They had not felt how poisonous it was while they stayed in it; they had only felt tired, and unrefreshed, with a dull headache; but now that Tom came back again into it, he could not mistake its oppressive nature. He went to the window to try and open it. It was what people call a "Yorkshire light," where you know one half has to be pushed on one side. It was very stiff, for it had not been opened for a long time. Tom pushed against

it with all his might; at length it gave way with a jerk; and the shake sent out a cracked pane, which fell on the floor in a hundred little bits. Tom was sadly frightened when he saw what he had done. He would have been sorry to have done mischief at any time, but he had seen enough of his aunt the evening before, to find out that she was sharp and hasty and cross; and it was hard to have to begin the first day in his new home, by getting into a scrape. He sat down on the bedside, and began to cry. But the morning air blowing in upon him refreshed him, and made him feel stronger. He grew braver as he washed himself in the pure cold water. "She can't be cross with me longer than a day; by to-night it will be all over: I can bear it for a day."

Dick came running upstairs for something he had forgotten.

"My word! Tom! but you 'll catch it!" exclaimed he, when he saw the broken window. He was half pleased at the event, and half sorry for Tom. "Mother did so beat Jack last week for throwing a stone right through the window downstairs. He kept out of the way till night, but she was on the look-out for him, and as soon as she saw him, she caught hold of him and gave it him. Eh! Tom, I would not be you, for a deal!"

Tom began to cry again at this account of his aunt's anger; Dick became more and more sorry for him.

"I'll tell thee what; we 'll go down and say it was a lad in yon back-yard throwing stones, and that one went smack through the window. I 've got one in my pocket that will just do to show."

"No," said Tom, suddenly stopping crying. "I dare not do that."

"Daren't! Why you 'll have to dare much more if you go down and face mother without some such story."

"No! I shan't. I shan't have to dare God's anger. Mother taught me to fear that; she said I need never be really afraid of aught else. Just be quiet, Dick, while I say my prayers."

Dick watched his little cousin kneel down by the bed, and bury his face in the clothes; he did not say any set prayer (which Dick was accustomed to think was the only way of praying), but Tom sounded, by the low murmuring which Dick heard, to be talking to a dear friend; and though at first

he sobbed and cried, as he asked for help and strength, yet when he got up, his face looked calm and bright, and he spoke quietly as he said to Dick, "Now I'm ready to go and tell aunt."

"Aunt" meanwhile had missed her pitcher and her soap, and was in no good-tempered mood when Tom came to make his confession. She had been hindered in her morning's work by his taking her things away; and now he was come to tell her of the pane being broken and that it must be mended, and money must go all for a child's nonsense.

She gave him (as he had been led to expect,) one or two very sharp blows. Jack and Dick looked on with curiosity, to see how he would take it; Jack, at any rate, expecting a hearty crying from "softy," (Jack himself had cried loudly at his last beating,) but Tom never shed a tear, though his face did go very red, and his mouth did grow set with the pain. But what struck the boys more even than his being "hard" in bearing such blows, was his quietness afterwards. He did not grumble loudly, as Jack would have done; nor did he turn sullen as was Dick's custom; but the minute afterwards he was ready to run an errand for his aunt; nor did he make any mention of the hard blows, when his uncle came in to breakfast, as his aunt had rather expected he would. She was glad he did not, for she knew her husband would have been displeased to know how early she had begun to beat his orphan nephew. So she almost felt grateful to Tom for his silence, and certainly began to be sorry she had struck him so hard.

Poor Tom! he did not know that his cousins were beginning to respect him, nor that his aunt was learning to like him; and he felt very lonely and desolate that first morning. He had nothing to do. Jack went to work at the factory; and Dick went grumbling to school. Tom wondered if he was to go to school again, but he did not like to ask. He sat on a little stool, as much out of his terrible aunt's way as he could. She had her youngest child, a little girl of about a year and a half old, crawling about on the floor. Tom longed to play with her; but he was not sure how far his aunt would like it. But he kept

smiling at her, and doing every little thing he could to attract her attention and make her come to him. At last she was coaxed to come upon his knee. His aunt saw it, and though she did not speak, she did not look displeased. He did everything he could think of to amuse little Annie; and her mother was very glad to have her attended to. When Annie grew sleepy, she still kept fast hold of one of Tom's fingers in her little round soft hand, and he began to know the happy feeling of loving somebody again. Only the night before, when his cousins had made him get out of bed, he had wondered if he should live to be an old man, and never have any body to love all that long time; but now his heart felt quite warm to the little thing that lay on his lap.

"She 'll tire you, Tom," said her mother, "you 'd better let me put her down in the cot."

"Oh no!" said he, "please don't! I like so much to have her here." He never moved, though she lay very heavy on his arm, for fear of wakening her.

When she did rouse up, his aunt said, "Thank you, Tom. I 've got my work done rarely with you for a nurse. Now take a run in the yard, and play yourself a bit."

His aunt was learning something, and Tom was teaching, though they would both have been very much surprised to hear it. Whenever, in a family, every one is selfish, and (as it is called) "stands up for his own rights," there are no feelings of gratitude; the gracefulness of "thanks" is never called for; nor can there be any occasion for thoughtfulness for others when those others are sure to get the start in thinking for themselves, and taking care of number one. Tom's aunt had never had to remind Jack or Dick to go out to play. They were ready enough to see after their own pleasures.

Well! dinner-time came, and all the family gathered to the meal. It seemed to be a scramble who should be helped first, and cries out for the best pieces. Tom looked very red. His aunt in her new-born liking for him helped him early to what she thought he would like. But he did not begin to eat. It had been his mother's custom to teach her little son to say a simple

“Grace” with her before they began their dinner. He expected his uncle to follow the same observance; and waited. Then he felt very hot and shy; but, thinking that it was right to say it, he put away his shyness, and very quietly, but very solemnly said the old accustomed sentence of thanksgiving. Jack burst out laughing when he had done; for which Jack’s father gave him a sharp rap and a sharp word, which made him silent through the rest of the dinner. But, excepting Jack, who was angry, I think all the family were the happier for having listened reverently (if with some surprise) to Tom’s thanksgiving. They were not an ill-disposed set of people, but wanted thoughtfulness in their every-day life; that sort of thoughtfulness which gives order to a home, and makes a wise and holy spirit of love the ground-work of order.

From that first day Tom never went back in the regard he began then to win. He was useful to his aunt, and patiently bore her hasty ways, until for very shame she left off being hasty with one who was always so meek and mild. His uncle sometimes said he was more like a girl than a boy, as was to be looked for from being brought up for so many years by a woman; but that was the greatest fault he ever had to find with him; and in spite of it, he really respected him for the very qualities which are most truly “manly;” for the courage with which he dared to do what was right, and the quiet firmness with which he bore many kinds of pain. As for little Annie, her friendship and favour and love were the delight of Tom’s heart. He did not know how much the others were growing to like him, but Annie showed it in every way, and he loved her in return most dearly. Dick soon found out how useful Tom could be to him in his lessons; for though older than his cousin, Master Dick was a regular dunce, and had never even wished to learn till Tom came; and long before Jack could be brought to acknowledge it, Dick maintained that “Tom had a great deal of pluck in him, though it was not of Jack’s kind.”

Now I shall jump another year, and tell you a very little about the household twelve months after Tom had entered it. I said above that his aunt had learned to speak less crossly to

one who was always gentle, after her scoldings. By and by her ways to all became less hasty and passionate, for she grew ashamed of speaking to any one in an angry way before Tom; he always looked so sad and sorry to hear her. She has also spoken to him sometimes about his mother; at first because she thought he would like it; but latterly because she became really interested to hear of her ways; and Tom being an only child, and his mother's friend and companion, has been able to tell her of many household arts of comfort, which coming quite unconscious of any purpose, from the lips of a child, have taught her many things which she would have been too proud to learn from an older person. Her husband is softened by the additional cleanliness and peace of his home. He does not now occasionally take refuge in a public-house, to get out of the way of noisy children, an unswept hearth, and a scolding wife. Once when Tom was ill for a day or two, his uncle missed the accustomed grace, and began to say it himself. He is now the person to say "Silence, boys;" and then to ask the blessing on the meal. It makes them gather round the table, instead of sitting down here and there in the comfortless, unsociable way they used to do. Tom and Dick go to school together now, and Dick is getting on famously, and will soon be able to help his next brother over his lessons, as Tom has helped him.

Even Jack has been heard to acknowledge that Tom has "pluck" in him; and as "pluck" in Jack's mind is a short way of summing up all the virtues, he has lately become very fond of his cousin. Tom does not think about happiness, but is happy; and I think we may hope that he, and the household among whom he is adopted, will go "from strength to strength."

Now do you not see how much happier this family are from the one circumstance of a little child's coming among them? Could money have made one-tenth part of this real and increasing happiness? I think you will all say no. And yet Tom was no powerful person; he was not clever; he was very friendless at first; but he was loving and good; and on those two qualities, which any of us may have if we try, the blessing of God lies in rich abundance.

BESSY'S TROUBLES AT HOME.

"WELL, mother, I 've got you a Southport ticket," said Bessy Lee, as she burst into a room where a pale, sick woman lay dressed on the outside of a bed. "Aren't you glad?" asked she, as her mother moved uneasily, but did not speak.

"Yes, dear, I 'm very thankful to you; but your sudden coming in has made my heart flutter so, I 'm ready to choke."

Poor Bessy's eyes filled with tears: but, it must be owned, they were tears half of anger. She had taken such pains, ever since the doctor said that Southport was the only thing for her mother, to get her an order from some subscriber to the charity: and she had rushed to her, in the full glow of success, and now her mother seemed more put out by the noise she had made on coming in, than glad to receive the news she had brought.

Mrs. Lee took her hand and tried to speak, but, as she said, she was almost choked with the palpitation at her heart.

"You think it very silly in me, dear, to be so easily startled; but it is not altogether silliness; it is I am so weak that every little noise gives me quite a fright. I shall be better, love, please God, when I come back from Southport. I am so glad you 've got the order, for you 've taken a deal of pains about it."

Mrs. Lee sighed.

"Don't you want to go?" asked Bessy, rather sadly. "You always seem so sorrowful and anxious when we talk about it."

"It's partly my being ailing that makes me anxious, I know," said Mrs. Lee. "But it seems as if so many things might happen while I was away."

Bessy felt a little impatient. Young people in strong health can hardly understand the fears that beset invalids. Bessy was a kind-hearted girl, but rather headstrong, and just now a little

disappointed. She forgot that her mother had had to struggle hard with many cares ever since she had been left a widow, and that her illness now had made her nervous.

"What nonsense, mother! What can happen? I can take care of the house and the little ones, and Tom and Jem can take care of themselves. What is to happen?"

"Jenny may fall into the fire," murmured Mrs. Lee, who found little comfort in being talked to in this way. "Or your father's watch may be stolen while you are in, talking with the neighbours, or—"

"Now come, mother, you know I've had the charge of Jenny ever since father died, and you began to go out washing—and I'll lock father's watch up in the box in our room."

"Then Tom and Jem won't know at what time to go to the factory. Besides, Bessy," said she, raising herself up, "they're but young lads, and there's a deal of temptation to take them away from their homes, if their homes are not comfortable and pleasant to them. It's that, more than anything, I've been fretting about all the time I've been ill,—that I've lost the power of making this house the cleanest and brightest place they know. But it's no use fretting," said she, falling back weakly upon the bed and sighing. "I must leave it in God's hands. He raiseth up and He bringeth low."

Bessy stood silent for a minute or two. Then she said, "Well, mother, I will try to make home comfortable for the lads, if you'll but keep your mind easy, and go off to Southport quiet and cheerful."

"I'll try," said Mrs. Lee, taking hold of Bessy's hand, and looking up thankfully in her face.

The next Wednesday she set off, leaving home with a heavy heart, which, however, she struggled against, and tried to make more faithful. But she wished her three weeks at Southport were over.

Tom and Jem were both older than Bessy, and she was fifteen. Then came Bill and Mary and little Jenny. They were all good children, and all had faults. Tom and Jem helped to support the family by their earnings at the factory, and gave up

their wages very cheerfully for this purpose, to their mother, who, however, insisted on a little being put by every week in the savings' bank. It was one of her griefs now that, when the doctor ordered her some expensive delicacy in the way of diet during her illness (a thing which she persisted in thinking she could have done without), her boys had gone and taken their money out in order to procure it for her. The article in question did not cost one quarter of the amount of their savings, but they had put off returning the remainder into the bank, saying the doctor's bill had yet to be paid, and that it seemed so silly to be always taking money in and out. But meanwhile Mrs. Lee feared lest it should be spent, and begged them to restore it to the savings' bank. This had not been done when she left for Southport. Bill and Mary went to school. Little Jenny was the darling of all, and toddled about at home, having been her sister Bessy's especial charge when all went on well, and the mother used to go out to wash.

Mrs. Lee, however, had always made a point of giving all her children who were at home a comfortable breakfast at seven, before she set out to her day's work; and she prepared the boys' dinner ready for Bessy to warm for them. At night, too, she was anxious to be at home as soon after her boys as she could; and many of her employers respected her wish, and, finding her hard-working and conscientious, took care to set her at liberty early in the evening.

Bessy felt very proud and womanly when she returned home from seeing her mother off by the railway. She looked round the house with a new feeling of proprietorship, and then went to claim little Jenny from the neighbours where she had been left while Bessy had gone to the station. They asked her to stay and have a bit of chat; but she replied that she could not, for that it was near dinner time, and she refused the invitation that was then given her to go in some evening. She was full of good plans and resolutions.

That afternoon she took Jenny and went to her teacher's to borrow a book, which she meant to ask one of her brothers to read to her in the evenings while she worked. She knew that it

was a book which Jem would like, for though she had never read it, one of her school-fellows had told her it was all about the sea, and desert islands, and cocoa-nut trees, just the things that Jem liked to hear about. How happy they would all be this evening.

She hurried Jenny off to bed before her brothers came home; Jenny did not like to go so early, and had to be bribed and coaxed to give up the pleasure of sitting on brother Tom's knee; and when she was in bed, she could not go to sleep, and kept up a little whimper of distress. Bessy kept calling out to her, now in gentle, now in sharp tones, as she made the hearth clean and bright against her brothers' return, as she settled Bill and Mary to their next day's lessons, and got her work ready for a happy evening.

Presently the elder boys came in.

"Where's Jenny?" asked Tom, the first thing.

"I've put her to bed," said Bessy. "I've borrowed a book for you to read to me while I darn the stockings; and it was time for Jenny to go."

"Mother never puts her to bed so soon," said Tom, dissatisfied.

"But she'd be so in the way of any quietness over our reading," said Bessy.

"I don't want to read," said Tom; "I want Jenny to sit on my knee, as she always does while I eat my supper."

"Tom, Tom, dear Tom!" called out little Jenny, who had heard his voice, and, perhaps, a little of the conversation.

Tom made but two steps upstairs, and re-appeared with Jenny in his arms, in her night-clothes. The little girl looked at Bessy half triumphant and half afraid. Bessy did not speak, but she was evidently very much displeased. Tom began to eat his porridge with Jenny on his knee. Bessy sat in sullen silence; she was vexed with Tom, vexed with Jenny, and vexed with Jem, to gratify whose taste for reading travels she had especially borrowed this book, which he seemed to care so little about. She brooded over her fancied wrongs, ready to fall upon the first person who might give the slightest occasion for

anger. It happened to be poor little Jenny, who, by some awkward movement, knocked over the jug of milk, and made a great splash on Bessy's clean white floor.

"Never mind!" said Tom, as Jenny began to cry. "I like my porridge as well without milk as with it."

"Oh, never mind!" said Bessy, her colour rising, and her breath growing shorter. "Never mind dirtying anything, Jenny; it 's only giving trouble to Bessy! But I'll make you mind," continued she, as she caught a glance of intelligence peep from Jem's eyes to Tom; and she slapped Jenny's head. The moment she had done it she was sorry for it; she could have beaten herself now with the greatest pleasure for having given way to passion; for she loved little Jenny dearly, and she saw that she really had hurt her. But Jem, with his loud, deep, "For shame, Bessy!" and Tom, with his excess of sympathy with his little sister's wrongs, checked back any expression which Bessy might have uttered of sorrow and regret. She sat there ten times more unhappy than she had been before the accident, hardening her heart to the reproaches of her conscience, yet feeling most keenly that she had been acting wrongly. No one seemed to notice her; this was the evening she had planned and arranged for so busily; and the others, who never thought about it at all, were all quiet and happy, at least in outward appearance, while she was so wretched. By-and-by, she felt the touch of a little soft hand stealing into her own. She looked to see who it was; it was Mary, who till now had been busy learning her lessons, but uncomfortably conscious of the discordant spirit prevailing in the room; and who had at last ventured up to Bessy, as the one who looked the most unhappy, to express, in her own little gentle way, her sympathy in sorrow. Mary was not a quick child; she was plain and awkward in her ways, and did not seem to have many words in which to tell her feelings, but she was very tender and loving, and submitted meekly and humbly to the little slights and rebuffs she often met with for her stupidity.

"Dear Bessy! good night!" said she, kissing her sister;

and, at the soft kiss, Bessy's eyes filled with tears, and her heart began to melt.

"Jenny," continued Mary, going to the little spoilt, wilful girl, "will you come to bed with me, and I'll tell you stories about school, and sing you my songs as I undress? Come, little one!" said she, holding out her arms. Jenny was tempted by this speech, and went off to bed in a more reasonable frame of mind than any one had dared to hope.

And now all seemed clear and open for the reading, but each was too proud to propose it. Jem, indeed, seemed to have forgotten the book altogether, he was so busy whittling away at a piece of wood. At last, Tom, by a strong effort, said, "Bessy, mayn't we have the book now?"

"No!" said Jem, "don't begin reading, for I must go out and try and make Ned Bates give me a piece of ash-wood — deal is just good for nothing."

"Oh!" said Bessy, "I don't want any one to read this book who does not like it. But I know mother would be better pleased if you were stopping at home quiet, rather than rambling to Ned Bates at this time of night."

"I know what mother would like as well as you, and I'm not going to be preached to by a girl," said Jem, taking up his cap and going out. Tom yawned and went up to bed. Bessy sat brooding over the evening.

"So much as I thought and I planned! I'm sure I tried to do what was right, and make the boys happy at home. And yet nothing has happened as I wanted it to do. Every one has been so cross and contrary. Tom would take Jenny up when she ought to have been in bed. Jem did not care a straw for this book that I borrowed on purpose for him, but sat laughing. I saw, though he did not think I did, when all was going provoking and vexatious. Mary — No! Mary was a help and a comfort, as she always is, I think, though she is so stupid over her book. Mary always contrives to get people right, and to have her own way somehow; and yet I'm sure she does not take half the trouble I do to please people."

Jem came back soon, disappointed because Ned Bates was

out, and could not give him any ash-wood. Bessy said it served him right for going at that time of night, and the brother and sister spoke angrily to each other all the way upstairs, and parted without even saying good-night. Jenny was asleep when Bessy entered the bedroom which she shared with her sisters and her mother; but she saw Mary's wakeful eyes looking at her as she came in.

"Oh Mary," said she, "I wish mother was back. The lads would mind her, and now I see they'll just go and get into mischief to spite and plague me."

"I don't think it's for that," said Mary, softly. "Jem did want that ash-wood, I know, for he told me in the morning he didn't think that deal would do. He wants to make a wedge to keep the window from rattling so on windy nights; you know how that fidgets mother."

The next day, little Mary, on her way to school, went round by Ned Bates's to beg a piece of wood for her brother Jem; she brought it home to him at dinner-time, and asked him to be so good as to have everything ready for a quiet whittling at night, while Tom or Bessy read aloud. She told Jenny she would make haste with her lessons, so as to be ready to come to bed early, and talk to her about school (a grand, wonderful place, in Jenny's eyes), and thus Mary quietly and gently prepared for a happy evening, by attending to the kind of happiness for which every one wished.

While Mary had thus been busy preparing for a happy evening, Bessy had been spending part of the afternoon at a Mrs. Foster's, a neighbour of her mother's, and a very tidy, industrious old widow. Mrs. Foster earned part of her livelihood by working for the shops where knitted work of all kinds is to be sold; and Bessy's attention was caught, almost as soon as she went in, by a very gay piece of wool-knitting, in a new stitch, that was to be used as a warm covering for the feet. After admiring its pretty looks, Bessy thought how useful it might be to her mother; and when Mrs. Foster heard this, she offered to teach Bessy how to do it. But where were the wools to come from? Those which Mrs. Foster used were provided her by the

shop; and she was a very poor woman — too poor to make presents, though rich enough (as we all are) to give help of many other kinds, and willing too to do what she could (which some of us are not).

The two sat perplexed. "How much did you say it would cost?" said Bessy at last; as if the article was likely to have become cheaper, since she asked the question before.

"Well! it's sure to be more than two shillings if it's German wool. You might get it for eighteenpence if you could be content with English."

"But I've not got eighteenpence," said Bessy gloomily.

"I could lend it you," said Mrs. Foster, "if I was sure of having it back before Monday. But it's part of my rent-money. Could you make sure, do you think?"

"Oh yes!" said Bessy, eagerly. "At least I'd try. But perhaps I had better not take it, for after all I don't know where I could get it. What Tom and Jem earn is little enough for the house, now that mother's washing is cut off."

"They are good, dutiful lads, to give it to their mother," said Mrs. Foster, sighing: for she thought of her own boys, that had left her in her old age to toil on, with faded eyesight, and weakened strength.

"Oh! but mother makes them each keep a shilling out of it for themselves," said Bessy, in a complaining tone, for she wanted money, and was inclined to envy any one who possessed it.

"That's right enough," said Mrs. Foster. "They that earn it should have some of the power over it."

"But about this wool; this eighteenpence! I wish I was a boy and could earn money. I wish mother would have let me go to work in the factory."

"Come now, Bessy, I can have none of that nonsense. Thy mother knows what's best for thee; and I'm not going to hear thee complain of what she has thought right. But may be, I can help you to a way of gaining eighteenpence. Mrs. Scott at the worsted shop told me that she should want some one to clean on Saturday; now you're a good strong girl, and can do a woman's

work if you've a mind. Shall I say you will go? and then I don't mind if I lend you my eighteenpence. You'll pay me before I want my rent on Monday."

"Oh! thank you, dear Mrs. Foster," said Bessy. "I can scour as well as any woman, mother often says so; and I'll do my best on Saturday; they shan't blame you for having spoken up for me."

"No, Bessy, they won't, I'm sure, if you do your best. You're a good sharp girl for your years."

Bessy lingered for some time, hoping that Mrs. Foster would remember her offer of lending her the money; but finding that she had quite forgotten it, she ventured to remind the kind old woman. That it was nothing but forgetfulness, was evident from the haste with which Mrs. Foster hustled up to her tea-pot and took from it the money required.

"You're as welcome to it as can be, Bessy, as long as I'm sure of its being repaid by Monday. But you're in a mighty hurry about this coverlet," continued she, as she saw Bessy put on her bonnet and prepare to go out. "Stay, you must take patterns, and go to the right shop in St. Mary's Gate. Why, your mother won't be back this three weeks, child."

"No. But I can't abide waiting, and I want to set to it before it is dark; and you'll teach me the stitch, won't you, when I come back with the wools? I won't be half an hour away."

But Mary and Bill had to "abide waiting" that afternoon; for though the neighbour at whose house the key was left could let them into the house, there was no supper ready for them on their return from school; even Jenny was away spending the afternoon with a playfellow; the fire was nearly out, the milk had been left at a neighbour's; altogether home was very comfortless to the poor tired chidden, and Bill grumbled terribly; Mary's head ached, and the very tones of her brother's voice, as he complained, gave her pain; and for a minute she felt inclined to sit down and cry. But then she thought of many little sayings which she had heard from her teacher — such as "Never complain of what you can cure." "Bear and forbear,"

and several other short sentences of a similar description. So she began to make up the fire, and asked Bill to fetch some chips; and when he gave her the gruff answer, that he did not see any use in making a fire when there was nothing to cook by it, she went herself and brought the wood without a word of complaint.

Presently Bill said, "Here! you lend me those bellows; you're not blowing it in the right way; girls never do!" He found out that Mary was wise in making a bright fire ready; for before the blowing was ended, the neighbour with whom the milk had been left, brought it in, and little handy Mary prepared the porridge as well as the mother herself could have done. They had just ended when Bessy came in almost breathless; for she had suddenly remembered, in the middle of her knitting lesson, that Bill and Mary must be at home from school.

"Oh!" she said, "that's right. I have so hurried myself! I was afraid the fire would be out. Where's Jenny? You were to have called for her, you know, as you came from school. Dear! how stupid you are, Mary. I am sure I told you over and over again. Now don't cry, silly child. The best thing you can do is to run off back again for her."

"But my lessons,, Bessy. They are so bad to learn. It's tables day to-morrow," pleaded Mary.

"Nonsense; tables are as easy as can be. I can say up to sixteen times sixteen in no time."

"But you know, Bessy, I'm very stupid, and my head aches so to-night!"

"Well! the air will do it good. Really, Mary, I would go myself, only I'm so busy; and you know Bill is too careless, mother says, to fetch Jenny through the streets; and besides they would quarrel, and you can always manage Jenny."

Mary sighed, and went away to bring her sister home. Bessy sat down to her knitting. Presently Bill came up to her with some question about his lesson. She told him the answer without looking at the book; it was all wrong, and made nonsense; but Bill did not care to understand what he learnt, and went on

saying, "Twelve inches make one shilling," as contentedly as if it were right.

Mary brought Jenny home quite safely. Indeed, Mary always did succeed in everything, except learning her lessons well; and sometimes, if the teacher could have known how many tasks fell upon the willing, gentle girl at home, she would not have thought that poor Mary was slow or a dunce; and such thoughts would come into the teacher's mind sometimes, although she fully appreciated Mary's sweetness and humility of disposition.

To-night she tried hard at her tables, and all to no use. Her head ached so, she could not remember them, do what she would. She longed to go to her mother, whose cool hands around her forehead always seemed to do her so much good, and whose soft, loving words were such a help to her when she had to bear pain. She had arranged so many plans for to-night, and now all were deranged by Bessy's new fancy for knitting. But Mary did not see this in the plain, clear light in which I have put it before you. She only was sorry that she could not make haste with her lessons, as she had promised Jenny, who was now upbraiding her with the non-fulfilment of her words. Jenny was still up when Tom and Jem came in. They spoke sharply to Bessy for not having their porridge ready; and while she was defending herself, Mary, even at the risk of imperfect lessons, began to prepare the supper for her brothers. She did it all so quietly, that, almost before they were aware, it was ready for them; and Bessy, suddenly ashamed of herself, and touched by Mary's quiet helpfulness, bent down and kissed her, as once more she settled to the never-ending difficulty of her lesson.

Mary threw her arms round Bessy's neck, and began to cry, for this little mark of affection went to her heart; she had been so longing for a word or a sign of love in her suffering.

"Come, Molly," said Jem, "don't cry like a baby;" but he spoke very kindly. "What's the matter? the old headache come back? Never mind. Go to bed, and it will be better in the morning."

"But I can't go to bed. I don't know my lesson!" Mary looked happier, though the tears were in her eyes.

"I know mine," said Bill, triumphantly.

"Come here," said Jem. "There! I've time enough to whittle away at this before mother comes back. Now let's see this difficult lesson."

Jem's help soon enabled Mary to conquer her lesson; but, meanwhile, Jenny and Bill had taken to quarrelling in spite of Bessy's scolding, administered in small sharp doses, as she looked up from her all-absorbing knitting.

"Well," said Tom, "with this riot on one side, and this dull lesson on the other, and Bessy as cross as can be in the midst, I can understand what makes a man go out to spend his evenings from home."

Bessy looked up, suddenly wakened up to a sense of the danger which her mother had dreaded.

Bessy thought it was very fortunate that it fell on a Saturday, of all days in the week, that Mrs. Scott wanted her; for Mary would be at home, who could attend to the household wants of everybody; and so she satisfied her conscience at leaving the post of duty that her mother had assigned to her, and that she had promised to fulfil. She was so eager about her own plans that she did not consider this; she did not consider at all, or else I think she would have seen many things to which she seemed to be blind now. When were Mary's lessons for Monday to be learnt? Bessy knew as well as we do, that lesson-learning was hard work to Mary. If Mary worked as hard as she could after morning school she could hardly get the house cleaned up bright and comfortable before her brothers came home from the factory, which "loosed" early on the Saturday afternoon; and if pails of water, chairs heaped up one on the other, and tables put topsy-turvy on the dresser, were the most prominent objects in the house-place, there would be no temptation for the lads to stay at home; besides which, Mary, tired and weary (however gentle she might be), would not be able to give the life to the evening that Bessy, a clever, spirited girl, near their own age, could easily do, if she chose to be in-

tered and sympathising in what they had to tell. But Bessy did not think of all this. What she did think about was the pleasant surprise she should give her mother by the warm and pretty covering for her feet, which she hoped to present her with on her return home. And if she had done the duties she was pledged to on her mother's departure *first*, if they had been compatible with her plan of being a whole day absent from home, in order to earn the money for the wools, the project of the surprise would have been innocent and praiseworthy.

Bessy prepared everything for dinner before she left home that Saturday morning. She made a potatoe-pie all ready for putting in the oven; she was very particular in telling Mary what was to be cleaned, and how it was all to be cleaned; and then she kissed the children, and ran off to Mrs. Scott's. Mary was rather afraid of the responsibility thrust upon her; but still she was pleased that Bessy could trust her to do so much. She took Jenny to the ever-useful neighbour, as she and Bill went to school; but she was rather frightened when Mrs. Jones began to grumble about these frequent visits of the child.

"I was ready enough to take care of the wench when thy mother was ill; there was reason for that. And the child is a nice child enough, when she is not cross; but still there are some folks, it seems, who, if you give them an inch, will take an ell. Where's Bessy, that she can't mind her own sister?"

"Gone out charing," said Mary, clasping the little hand in hers tighter, for she was afraid of Mrs. Jones's anger.

"I could go out charing every day in the week if I'd the face to trouble other folks with my children," said Mrs. Jones, in a surly tone.

"Shall I take her back, ma'am?" said Mary, timidly, though she knew this would involve her staying away from school, and being blamed by the dear teacher. But Mrs. Jones growled worse than she bit, this time at least.

"No," said she, "you may leave her with me. I suppose she's had her breakfast?"

"Yes; and I'll fetch her away as soon as ever I can after twelve."

If Mary had been one to consider the hardships of her little lot, she might have felt this morning's occurrence as one;—that she, who dreaded giving trouble to anybody, and was painfully averse from asking any little favour for herself, should be the very one on whom it fell to presume upon another person's kindness. But Mary never did think of any hardships; they seemed the natural events of life, and as if it was fitting and proper that she, who managed things badly, and was such a dunce, should be blamed. Still she was rather flurried by Mrs. Jones's scolding; and almost wished that she had taken Jenny home again. Her lessons were not well said, owing to the distraction of her mind.

When she went for Jenny she found that Mrs. Jones, repenting of her sharp words, had given the little girl bread and treacle, and made her very comfortable; so much so that Jenny was not all at once ready to leave her little playmates, and when once she had set out on the road, she was in no humour to make haste. Mary thought of the potatoe-pie and her brothers, and could almost have cried, as Jenny, heedless of her sister's entreaties, would linger at the picture-shops.

"I shall be obliged to go and leave you, Jenny! I must get dinner ready."

"I don't care," said Jenny. "I don't want any dinner, and I can come home quite well by myself."

Mary half longed to give her a fright, it was so provoking. But she thought of her mother, who was so anxious always about Jenny, and she did not do it. She kept patiently trying to attract her onwards, and at last they were at home. Mary stirred up the fire, which was to all appearance quite black; it blazed up, but the oven was cold. She put the pie in, and blew the fire; but the paste was quite white and soft when her brothers came home, eager and hungry.

"Oh! Mary, what a manager you are!" said Tom. "Any one else would have remembered and put the pie in, in time."

Mary's eyes filled full of tears; but she did not try to justify

herself. She went on blowing, till Jem took the bellows, and kindly told her to take off her bonnet, and lay the cloth. Jem was always kind. He gave Tom the best baked side of the pie, and quietly took the side himself where the paste was little better than dough, and the potatoes quite hard; and when he caught Mary's little anxious face watching him, as he had to leave part of his dinner untasted, he said, "Mary, I should like this pie warmed up for supper; there is nothing so good as potatoe-pie made hot the second time."

Tom went off saying, "Mary, I would not have you for a wife on any account. Why! my dinner would never be ready, and your sad face would take away my appetite if it were."

But Jem kissed her, and said, "Never mind, Mary! you and I will live together, old maid and old bachelor."

So she could set to with spirit to her cleaning, thinking there never was such a good brother as Jem; and as she dwelt upon his perfections, she thought who it was who had given her such a good, kind brother, and felt her heart full of gratitude to Him. She scoured and cleaned in right down earnest. Jenny helped her for some time, delighted to be allowed to touch and lift things. But then she grew tired; and Bill was out of doors; so Mary had to do all by herself, and grew very nervous and frightened, lest all should not be finished and tidy against Tom came home. And the more frightened she grew, the worse she got on. Her hands trembled, and things slipped out of them; and she shook so, she could not lift heavy pieces of furniture quickly and sharply; and in the middle the clock struck the hour for her brother's return, when all ought to have been tidy and ready for tea. She gave it up in despair, and began to cry.

"Oh, Bessy, Bessy! why did you go away? I have tried hard, and I cannot do it," said she aloud, as if Bessy could hear.

"Dear Mary, don't cry," said Jenny, suddenly coming away from her play. "I'll help you. I am very strong. I can do anything. I can lift that pan off the fire."

The pan was full of boiling water, ready for Mary. Jenny

took hold of the handle, and dragged it along the bar over the fire. Mary sprung forwards in terror to stop the little girl. She never knew how it was, but the next moment her arm and side were full of burning pain, which turned her sick and dizzy, and Jenny was crying passionately beside her.

"Oh, Mary! Mary! Mary! my hand is so scalded. What shall I do? I cannot bear it. It's all about my feet on the ground." She kept shaking her hand to cool it by the action of the air. Mary thought that she herself was dying, so acute and terrible was the pain; she could hardly keep from screaming out aloud; but she felt that if she once began she could not stop herself, so she sat still, moaning, and the tears running down her face like rain. "Go, Jenny," said she, "and tell some one to come."

"I can't, I can't, my hand hurts so," said Jenny. But she flew wildly out of the house the next minute, crying out, "Mary is dead. Come, come, come!" For Mary could bear it no longer; but had fainted away, and looked, indeed, like one that was dead. Neighbours flocked in; and one ran for a doctor. In five minutes Tom and Jem came home. What a home it seems! People they hardly knew standing in the house-place, which looked as if it had never been cleaned — all was so wet, and in such disorder, and dirty with the trampling of many feet; Jenny still crying passionately, but half comforted at being at present the only authority as to how the affair happened; and faint moans from the room upstairs, where some women were cutting the clothes off poor Mary, preparatory for the doctor's inspection. Jem said directly, "Some one go straight to Mrs. Scott's, and fetch our Bessy. Her place is here, with Mary."

And then he civilly, but quietly, dismissed all the unnecessary and useless people, feeling sure that in case of any kind of illness, quiet was the best thing. Then he went upstairs.

Mary's face was scarlet now with violent pain; but she smiled a little through her tears at seeing Jem. As for him, he cried outright.

"I don't think it was anybody's fault, Jem," said she, softly.
"It was very heavy to lift."

"Are you in great pain, dear?" asked Jem, in a whisper.
"I think I'm killed, Jem. I do think I am. And I did so want to see mother again."

"Nonsense!" said the woman who had been helping Mary. For, as she said afterwards, whether Mary died or lived, crying was a bad thing for her; and she saw the girl was ready to cry when she thought of her mother, though she had borne up bravely all the time the clothes were cut off.

Bessy's face, which had been red with hard running, faded to a dead white when she saw Mary; she looked so shocked and ill that Jem had not the heart to blame her, although the minute before she came in he had been feeling very angry with her. Bessy stood quite still at the foot of Mary's bed, never speaking a word, while the doctor examined her side and felt her pulse; only great round tears gathered in her eyes, and rolled down her cheeks, as she saw Mary quiver with pain. Jem followed the doctor downstairs. Then Bessy went and knelt beside Mary and wiped away the tears that were trickling down the little face.

"Is it very bad, Mary?" asked Bessy.

"Oh yes! yes! if I speak, I shall scream."

Then Bessy covered her head in the bed-clothes and cried outright.

"I was not cross, was I? I did not mean to be — but I hardly know what I am saying," moaned out little Mary.
"Please forgive me, Bessy, if I was cross."

"God forgive me!" said Bessy very low. They were the first words she had spoken since she came home. But there could be no more talking between the sisters, for now the woman returned who had at first been assisting Mary. Presently Jem came to the door, and beckoned. Bessy rose up, and went with him below. Jem looked very grave, yet not so sad as he had done before the doctor came. "He says she must go into the Infirmary. He will see about getting her in."

"Oh, Jem! I did so want to nurse her myself!" said Bessy,

imploringly. "It was all my own fault," (she choked with crying); "and I thought I might do that for her, to make up."

"My dear Bessy," — before he had seen Bessy, he had thought he could never call her "dear" again, but now he began, "My dear Bessy, we both want Mary to get better, don't we? I am sure we do. And we want to take the best way of making her so, whatever that is; well, then, I think we must not be considering what we should like best just for ourselves, but what people, who know as well as doctors do, say is the right way. I can't remember all that he said; but I'm clear that he told me, all wounds on the skin required more and better air to heal in than Mary could have here: and there the doctor will see her twice a-day, if need be."

Bessy shook her head, but could not speak at first. At last she said, "Jem, I did so want to do something for her. No one could nurse her as I should."

Jem was silent. At last he took Bessy's hand, for he wanted to say something to her that he was afraid might vex her, and yet that he thought he ought to say.

"Bessy!" said he, "when mother went away, you planned to do all things right at home, and to make us all happy. I know you did. Now may I tell you how I think you went wrong? Don't be angry, Bessy."

"I think I shall never have spirit enough in me to be angry again," said Bessy humbly and sadly.

"So much the better, dear. But don't over-fret about Mary. The doctor has good hopes of her, if he can get her into the Infirmary. Now, I'm going on to tell you, how I think you got wrong after mother left. You see, Bessy, you wanted to make us all happy your way — as you liked; just as you are wanting now to nurse Mary in your way, and as you like. Now, as far as I can make out, those folks who make home the happiest, are people who try and find out how others think they could be happy, and then, if it's not wrong, help them on with their wishes as far as they can. You know, you wanted us all to listen to your book; and very kind it was in you to think of it; only

you see, one wanted to whittle, and another wanted to do this or that, and then you were vexed with us all. I don't say but what I should have been if I had been in your place, and planned such a deal for others; only lookers-on always see a deal; and I saw that if you'd done what poor little Mary did next day, we should all have been far happier. She thought how she could forward us in our plans, instead of trying to force a plan of her own on us. She got me my right sort of wood for whittling, and arranged all nicely to get the little ones off to bed, so as to get the house quiet, if you wanted some reading, as she thought you did. And that's the way, I notice, some folk have of making a happy home. Others may mean just as well, but they don't hit the thing."

"I dare say it's true," said Bessy. "But sometimes you all hang about as if you did not know what to do. And I thought reading travels would just please you all."

Jem was touched by Bessy's humble way of speaking, so different from her usual cheerful, self-confident manner. He answered, "I know you did, dear. And many a time we should have been glad enough of it, when we had nothing to do, as you say."

"I had promised mother to try and make you all happy, and this is the end of it!" said Bessy, beginning to cry afresh.

"But, Bessy! I think you were not thinking of your promise, when you fixed to go out and char."

"I thought of earning money."

"Earning money would not make us happy. We have enough, with care and management. If you were to have made us happy, you should have been at home, with a bright face, ready to welcome us; don't you think so, dear Bessy?"

"I did not want the money for home. I wanted to make mother a present of such a pretty thing!"

"Poor mother! I am afraid we must send for her home now. And she has only been three days at Southport!"

"Oh!" said Bessy, startled by this notion of Jem's; "don't, don't send for mother. The doctor did say so much about her going to Southport being the only thing for her, and I did so try

to get her an order! It will kill her, Jem! indeed it will; you don't know how weak and frightened she is, — oh, Jem, Jem!"

Jem felt the truth of what his sister was saying. At last, he resolved to leave the matter for the doctor to decide, as he had attended his mother, and now knew exactly how much danger there was about Mary. He proposed to Bessy that they should go and relieve the kind neighbour who had charge of Mary.

"But you won't send for mother," pleaded Bessy; "if it's the best thing for Mary, I'll wash up her things to-night, all ready for her to go into the Infirmary. I won't think of myself, Jem."

"Well! I must speak to the doctor," said Jem. "I must not try and fix any way just because we wish it, but because it is right."

All night long, Bessy washed and ironed, and yet was always ready to attend to Mary when Jem called her. She took Jenny's scalded hand in charge as well, and bathed it with the lotion the doctor sent; and all was done so meekly and patiently that even Tom was struck with it, and admired the change. The doctor came very early. He had prepared everything for Mary's admission into the Infirmary. And Jem consulted him about sending for his mother home. Bessy sat trembling, awaiting his answer.

"I am very unwilling to sanction any concealment. And yet, as you say, your mother is in a very delicate state. It might do her serious harm if she had any shock. Well! suppose for this once, I take it on myself. If Mary goes on as I hope, why—well! well! we'll see. Mind that your mother is told all when she comes home. And if our poor Mary grows worse — but I'm not afraid of that, with Infirmary care and nursing — but if she does, I'll write to your mother myself, and arrange with a kind friend I have at Southport all about sending her home. And now," said he, turning suddenly to Bessy, "tell me what you were doing from home when this happened. Did not your mother leave you in charge of all at home?"

"Yes, sir!" said Bessy, trembling. "But, sir, I thought I could earn money to make mother a present!"

"Thought! fiddle-de-dee. I'll tell you what; never you neglect the work clearly laid out for you by either God or man, to go making work for yourself, according to your own fancies. God knows what you are most fit for. Do that. And then wait; if you don't see your next duty clearly. You will not long be idle in this world, if you are ready for a summons. Now let me see that you send Mary all clean and tidy to the Infirmary."

Jem was holding Bessy's hand. "She has washed everything, and made it fit for a queen. Our Bessy worked all night long, and was content to let me be with Mary (where she wished sore to be), because I could lift her better, being the stronger."

"That's right. Even when you want to be of service to others, don't think how to please yourself."

I have not much more to tell you about Bessy. This sad accident of Mary's did her a great deal of good, although it cost her so much sorrow at first. It taught her several lessons, which it is good for every woman to learn, whether she is called upon, as daughter, sister, wife, or mother, to contribute to the happiness of a home. And Mary herself was hardly more thoughtful and careful to make others happy in their own way, provided that way was innocent, than was Bessy hereafter. It was a struggle between her and Mary which could be the least selfish, and do the duties nearest to them with the most faithfulness and zeal. The mother staid at Southport her full time, and came home well and strong. Then Bessy put her arms round her mother's neck, and told her all — and far more severely against herself than either the doctor or Jem did, when they related the same story afterwards.

THE END.



DATE DUE

FEB 09

JUL 03 2006

APR 07 2006

JUL 05 2011

AUG 17 2011

SEP 22 2011

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY



3 1197 01141 8727

